Police Officer Decision-Making in Stressful, Ambiguous and Potentially Violent Situations

A thesis
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of the requirements for the degree
of
Doctor of Psychology (Clinical; Forensic Specialisation)
at
Centre for Forensic Behavioural Science, Paul Mullen Centre
in association with
Swinburne University of Technology
Faculty of Health, Arts and Design
by
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Abstract

For the majority of us, decisions that have a ripple effect - impacting our colleagues, organisations, service consumers and the local community - are not typically made on a daily basis. However, what is for many of us an occasional event can be the daily reality of police officers. One only need recall the fatal shooting of 15-year-old Tyler Cassidy (see Coroner’s Court of Victoria, 2011) to recognise the paramount consequences that may succeed police officer decision-making.

Both researchers and practitioners have long recognised the need for decision-making theory to form the basis of police officer discretion (e.g., Worden & Brandl, 1990), particularly as demands on police officers grow on the count of technological advances and increasing accountability to the courts and the community. Despite this, the policing sector continues to receive little attention by means of generating an applicable and holistic theory of decision-making.

Working within a constructivist grounded theory method, this thesis explored the processes that underlie police officer decision-making. Forty-four, one-on-one interviews were conducted with operational Victoria Police members. Concurrent collection of data, analysis and theoretical development resulted in the generation of a grounded theory that explains how officers functioned within a context of uncertainty. Results indicated the presence of multiple interactions between organisational sociology, situational ambiguity and individual characteristics in the production of a decision outcome. Working within and between these three concepts, an overarching grounded theory of police officer decision-making was developed. From this, a critical analysis of police leadership as the basis for a new articulation between the occupational, organisational, and social spheres in the pursuit of a more contemporary police structure is provided.
Acknowledgments

The first words of this thesis were written with the pen of glory and triumph; the last with the rustic ink of humility and curiosity. I set out to meet the requirements of the course; what I gained was imponderable knowledge and meaning. I would like to thank Professor Stuart Thomas. You have taught me how to let go of the burden of perfectionism and to see the forest for the trees. Thank you to Professor Pamela Green for teaching me the most ethereal lesson of all; the world is only what I see of it – there is no fact, only interpretation. A thank you to Professor Michael Daffern for offering a helping hand and a patient ear.

I would like to extend my sincere and overwhelming gratitude to the officers who participated in this study; without their stories the words on the pages of this thesis would not bear their momentous substance. Thank you to Acting Inspector Vin Butera, you were the gatekeeper that helped transform ideas into reality.

A special thank you to my dear colleagues; Delene Brookstein, Marie Henshaw, and Svenja Senkans, you are three immensely inspirational women. Without you, I fear, I would not have learned the mammoth lesson of camaraderie.

I would like to thank my mother and father. Life has not always been kind to you. Thank you for showing me the value of adversity, thank you for teaching me perseverance and instilling in me fortitude. Admir, thank you for being exactly, perfectly just the way that you are – you are my oldest and most loyal friend.

Finally, I would like to thank my partner. Ammar, you have absorbed everything I have shared with you like a thirsty sponge! You have encouraged, consoled, cheered, and loved. I cannot wait to walk into ever more exciting adventures with you.
General Declaration

In accordance with Swinburne University of Technology regulations, the following declarations are made:

I, Ines Seric, hereby declare that this thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award to the candidate of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution, except where due reference is made in the text of the examinable outcome. To the best of the candidate’s knowledge this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the examinable outcome. Where the work is based on joint research or publications, the thesis discloses the relative contributions of the respective workers or authors.

As the candidate, I bore principal responsibility for the ideas, research design, implementation and writing of this thesis, under the supervision of Professor Stuart Thomas and Professor Pamela Green. In completing this thesis, I worked within the Centre for Forensic Behavioural Science and the School of Health Sciences, Swinburne University of Technology.

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Map of Victoria Police
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<th>Southern Metro Region</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Size:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>2,980 km²</td>
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<td>84,620 km²</td>
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<td><strong>Resident population:</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td>927,276</td>
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<td><strong>Six divisions:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Six divisions:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>17 PSAs:</strong></td>
<td><strong>14 PSAs:</strong></td>
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* Population is an approximate only.

CHAPTER ONE: AB INITIO – FROM THE BEGINNING

A lot of people think this is just a job that you go to take a lunch hour, job’s over, something like that. But it’s a twenty-four hour deal, no two ways about it. And what most people don’t see, just how hard it is to do the right thing. People think if I make a judgment call that that’s a judgment on them. But that’s not what I do, and that’s not what should be done. I have to take everything and play it as it lays. Sometimes people need a little help. Sometimes people need to be forgiven. And sometimes they need to go to jail. Now, it’s a very tricky thing on my part, making that call. The law is the law, and heck if I’m gonna break it.

Officer Jim Kurring, Magnolia (Film, 1999)

The police force constitutes a significant legal entity that lies at the core of modern society, widely recognised as “an organised body of police officers whose function and duty it is to maintain the peace and good domestic order, to prevent and detect crime, to protect life and property, and to provide emergency services” (Butt, 2004, p. 332). Various policing scholars have, over time, injected the coercive force component into the definition. Alderson (1979, p. 11), for example, noted that:

The police are instruments of the legal coercive power of the State to produce effects intended by the legislation … They deny unconstitutional power to others, while at the same time they have legal power to do their constitutional duty.

The mandate of the police, thus, comprises legal powers that fulfil the fundamental requirements of keeping the peace and preventing crime. Arguably, policing is a socially constructed entity - one that serves as a fundamental agent of social control and functions within a normative and institutional framework shaped by local value systems (e.g.,
Loader & Mulcahy, 2003; Reiner, 2000). Mandated with the overall governance of serving the community, uniformed, and highly visible the police represent the state’s legitimation and power (Bittner, 1990) whilst being protected from direct forms of unwarranted partisan political and other corporate interferences. The doctrine of constabulary independence, famously asserted by Lord Denning in R v. Metropolitan Police Commissioner, ex parte Blackburn (1968), decrees that:

No minister of the Crown can tell [the Commissioner] that he must, or must not, keep observation on this place or that; or that he must, or must not, prosecute this man or that one. Nor can any police authority tell him so. The responsibility for law enforcement lies on him. He is answerable to the law and to the law alone.

This centrality of discretion, as concisely stipulated by Lord Denning and the fictional Officer Jim, continues to be echoed in contemporary codes of police ethics. The Victoria Police Code of Conduct (2014, p. 3) recently observed that:

As a Victoria Police employee you will encounter many, varied and complex situations. Whatever the circumstances, you need to be able to make informed, professional and ethical decisions. While legislation and organisational policy rules and guidelines will direct or inform how to deal with certain matters, they cannot prescribe every situation or experience. Using a decision making framework that has regard to ethics, organisational values and human rights will help you make decisions that reflect organisational standards and community expectations.

The ongoing interest in police discretion inspired the current research, which set out to explore a twofold research question - how does police officer decision-making unfold amidst dynamic and fast-paced circumstances, and what information or strategies do police officers use to arrive at a decision outcome? In line with this, a grounded theory study was
undertaken to examine how officers make decisions in situations where specific actions are not prescribed by police policy and/or procedure. It is worth drawing a distinction here between discretion and what might be referred to as decision-making. The former is defined as the liberty to decide and is fundamentally dictated by the limits of legal authority (Stenning, 2009). The latter, in contrast, almost always involves some part of the former. That is, an officer must first conclude that he has the legal power to decide (i.e., discretion) before he can determine how best to resolve the problem situation (i.e., decision-making).

Decision-making is conceptualised in this thesis as a dynamic process that unfolds amidst uncertain and ever-changing circumstances. It occurs within the confines of the human mind, thus cannot be thought of as a linear process that results in the production of optimal decision outcomes (as proposed by Rational Choice Theory; e.g., Dastani, Hulstijn, & van der Torre, 2005). The prodigious interest in the process of decision-making as it occurs in the real-world is evidenced across various disciplines, including domains of firefighting (e.g., Lipshitz, Omodei, McClellan, & Wearing, 2007), aviation emergency (e.g., Orasanu, Martin, & Davison, 2001), military command (e.g., George, Kaempf, Klein, Thorsden, & Wold, 1996), and critical care nursing (e.g., Currey & Botti, 2003) to name but a few. Amidst the stark surge of interest, it is somewhat surprising that the policing sector continues to be predominantly overlooked. Consequential decisions made by police officers are apt to be examined as they may contribute to the societal perception of the police as not adequately prepared (Weitzer, 2005); positioning the police force at the forefront of public attention and critique.

The research presented in the current thesis is timely in many respects. It is timely in a theoretical sense as researchers have developed a more pronounced interest in explicating real-life decision-making. It is timely from a socio-legal perspective given the increased criticism of the police by the community and the subsequent ruptures in police-community
relations (e.g., Haile Michael & Ors v Konstantinidis, the Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police, the State of Victoria & Ors, 2010). It is also timely in a political sense as the issues of accountability and governance evidently continue to affect reform agenda (Victoria Police Blue Paper, 2014).

1.1 A Brief History of the Victorian Police

The police as we know it today was first conceived by English society in the second quarter of the nineteenth century (Reith, 1956). As is true for the majority of Common Law nations, Australia derived its policing antecedents from Peel’s Constabulary - a paramilitary form of policing emphasising the preservation of life and property and the detachment of the police from parish authorities (Reith, 1948). The Metropolitan Police Act 1839 (UK) introduced a centralised and unified system of policing, implemented piecemeal in Australian colonies under the aegis of the British government.

Prior to this, and during the mid-eighteenth century, the role of police in Australia was focused upon order maintenance of what was essentially a frontier land. Early policing was profoundly influenced by the conflict between the Aboriginal inhabitants and the newly-arrived British settlers (Broome, 1988; Reynolds, 1987). The intensity and duration of this conflict has been said to account for the paramilitary nature of Australian police who, unlike their British counterparts, were heavily armed and adopted a military appearance and function (Palmer, 1994; Protective Security Review, 1979).

In 1835, six years after the establishment of Peel’s new police, settlers from Van Diemen’s Land began to occupy the land of the Port Phillip District - later renamed the state of Victoria. Police officers were deployed a short time later in 1836, their main role pertaining to the propensity of White settlement. Almost two decades later in 1851, two events transformed the colony and altered policing practice and history. On the 1st of July the colony of Victoria separated from New South Wales - the discovery of gold followed and led
to a rapidly increasing population size. The established police servers were too sparsely distributed to control the escalating and unprecedented rates of crime and disorder. A centrally controlled Victoria police force was ultimately established in January of 1853 (Haldane, 1986), predicated on elements of the British policing experience modified to local conditions. Large numbers of armed police officers were dispatched to the goldfields to maintain law and order as well as to collect various mining taxes imposed on independent miners (Haldane, 1986). The miners eventually retaliated against the revenue raising measures, resulting in a period of civil disobedience (Connell & Irving, 1992) and the eruption of several riots including the Eureka Stockade in 1854, Buckland River in 1857, Lambing Flat in 1861 and the Clunes in 1873.

During the years of 1878-1880, the Kelly Outbreak epitomised the microcosm of the police, bringing to light the role and reputation of the police force through scrupulous commentary from a host of Kelly scholars (McQuilton, 1987). The historical events of this era were later linked to a broader struggle over land and challengers to squatter privilege, wherein “Australian nationalism took definite form in the class struggle between the landless majority and the land monopolising squatters” (Hancock, 1948, p. 60). In the aftermath of the Kelly Outbreak, the Longmore Royal Commission highlighted several areas of change that bought about substantial reform within the structure and function of Victoria Police (Royal Commission on the Police Force of Victoria, 1881-1883).

In the early 1880s policing in rural Victoria became less militaristic, in part due to the outcomes of the Royal Commission (Haldane, 1986) and in part as a result of the shift in significance of land as a basis for social division (Buckley & Wheelwright, 1988). The policing focus diverted away from rural areas and towards cities and regional towns where worker movements and militancy were on the rise. Waged labour became the primary form of livelihood: industrial unions expanded and were incorporated into the labour movement
(Love, 1988). With the onset of mass unemployment during the 1890s depression (Buckley & Wheelwright, 1988), social reform protests grew more politicised and the police were increasingly involved in the ongoing conflict between employers and workers. Police intervention in miner strikes frequently erupted into violent riots between the strikers and the police (Scates, 1990).

With the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, State police forces became heavily involved in surveillance. As part of the administration of the War Precautions Act “the police were to supplement their numbers with special mounted constables recruited by police officers in country districts” (Cain 1983, p. 237). The establishment of specialist paramilitary squads (e.g., the Special Operations Group) was further propagated during 1962-1975 in response to the Vietnam War (Hocking, 1993).

Currently, Victoria Police operates under the *Victoria Police Act 2013* guided by the strategic directions outlined in the Victoria Police Blueprint 2012-2015. Focus has been heavily set on effective service delivery, improving community safety, working with stakeholders, achieving goals, and developing the business (Victoria Police Blueprint, 2012-2015). As already noted, the Victoria Police Code of Conduct (2014) outlines that members “will encounter many, varied and complex situations” (p. 3) in achieving the above-specified goals and that under such circumstances “informed, professional and ethical decisions” ought to be made. The caveat that existing legislation, policy and guidelines “cannot prescribe every situation or experience” (p. 3) directly speaks to the purpose of the current thesis. Under circumstances where a prescribed strategic response is absent, it is unclear on what decision-making processes officers are to rely. Indeed, in circumstances where a prescribed method of response does exist, the police organisation cannot guarantee that officers will necessarily ascribe to such policy direction.
1.2 Epistemological Stance

The current investigation falls within the scope of social constructivism (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), which contends that reality is socially construed and cannot be perceived from an entirely unbiased and objective stance (Burr, 2004). Knowledge and truth are understood to be socially defined, emerging from the interactions of individuals (Schwandt, 2003) and varying across and within societies, groups and individuals themselves (Blaxter, Hughes, & Tight, 2006). Adopting a constructivist approach enabled the researcher to identify and give meaning to factors that may not have otherwise been exposed through metrics. The research sought to produce a grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) that reflected the issues of most importance to the research participants whilst acknowledging that generalisation across the entire police population was insurmountable.

The conception of a grounded theory was explicitly predicated on Charmaz’s (2006) constructivist method - Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) - designed for the analysis of social processes through which meaning is constructed and contested. The approach involves a series of iterative, analytic steps that direct the researcher to move back and forth between data and increasingly abstract theoretical concepts. The product of this process is a middle-range theory that is grounded in the data and developed in relation to the interpretations of the people experiencing the phenomenon (Gephart, 2004).

A constructivist approach was chosen given its strengths in theorising new areas of research (Charmaz, 2006) as well as its pragmatic and systematic approach to analysis (Myers, 2009). The explicit recognition that existent knowledge may influence perception and interpretation of data fell in line with the researcher’s own conceptualisation of human cognition. The acceptance of prior knowledge as inescapable enabled the use of existent knowledge as a method of stimulating theoretical sensitivity and generating hypotheses (Charmaz, 2006). As part of this, maintaining a level of vigilance was deemed paramount to
ensuring that interpretations and meanings assigned to the data did not stem from intrinsic biases:

The researcher’s scrutiny of his or her research experience, decisions, and interpretations in ways that bring the researcher into the process and allow the reader to assess how and to what extent the researcher’s interests, positions, and assumptions influenced inquiry. A reflexive stance informs how the researcher conducts his or her research, relates to the research participants, and represents them in written reports (Charmaz, 2006, p. 188-189).

In line with the researcher’s commitment to a constructivist approach, a reflexive stance was practiced throughout the research process and particularly during the iterative data collection and data analysis phase (e.g., Charmaz, 1990; 2006). Chapter 3 (Methodology) and Chapter 4 (Method) elaborate further on this and include specific examples to highlight how the above outlined notions were manifested.

1.3 Thesis Overview

The map of the thesis structure provided in Figure 1 illustrates the logic of the grounded theory approach worked through in this thesis and the factors that were found to be central to the functions of the participating Victoria Police members.

This introductory chapter provides a brief historical account of the policing context as well as a broad overview of the CGT approach. Next, the context within which the inquiry was conducted is introduced and situates the thesis within the current policing literature (Chapter 2). The CGT approach is then described (Chapter 3) and its principles are applied (Chapter 4). The research procedures described in the method chapters are subsequently evaluated across several dimensions of rigour (Chapter 5). Following this, analytic focus is drawn to the vacuum within which uncertainty functions - comprising the organisational
context (Chapter 6), the situational environment (Chapter 7), and the characteristics of the
decision-maker (Chapter 8). The dynamics between the organisation, the situational
environment and the decision-maker are integrated into an overarching grounded theory of
police officer decision-making (Chapter 9). The theory contends that the participating police
officers functioned within a system of uncertainty that unfolded as a result of a dynamic
interplay between a host of inter- and intra- individual factors. The implications for Victoria
Police are provided before the theory is offered for subsequent assessment and theoretical
development.
Figure 1. Thesis map.
CHAPTER TWO: THE BLUE LINE

Police officers are required to understand the workings of, and effectively operate in the complex social, political, and organisational systems within which they function (Mitchell & Casey, 2007). Fundamental to this task is the process of decision-making, an issue that has long presented as important yet controversial mostly due to the fact that “the decisions they [police officers] make largely define the limits of the criminal justice process and have a profound effect upon the overall administration of justice” (National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals, 1973). In his seminal paper, Goldstein (1960) argued that the function of the police officer cannot be wholly understood if it were to be reduced to principles of pure legality. That is, police officers do not merely apply legal maxims in a diplomatic and religious manner rather they employ their decision-making skills to invoke the law of the land (Goldstein, 1960).

Discretion became a considerable object of focus following Goldstein’s publication, with many police scholars suggesting that the manner in which order maintenance was enforced varied considerably and was most commonly the result of extra-legal and departmental features rather than training protocol and policies (Wilson, 1968). The primary concern that subsequently arose was the lack of surety that police officers were adhering to the doctrine of constabulary independence. As part of this debate, scholars posed the following questions: Were police officers completely protected from unwarranted political and other corporate or personal influences and pressures? Was police discretion arbitrary? Did it lead to unethical behaviour?

In an attempt to provide empirical answers, policing research respectively shifted its focus to the investigation of various factors hypothesised to impact police officer decision-making including organisational features (e.g., Smith, 1984), perpetrator characteristics (e.g.,...
Alpert, Dunham, & Smith, 2007; Klinger, 1994), and officer characteristics (Rosenbaum, 1987). This chapter provides an integrative review of this theoretical and empirical literature, synthesising extant information to enable for conclusions to be drawn about the current state of knowledge. Specifically, the review enabled:

(i) the identification of how police officer decision-making has thus far been conceptualised and measured,
(ii) the identification of gaps in knowledge,
(iii) the development and refinement of the research objectives, and
(iv) the construction of preliminary interview questions.

2.1 The Place of Extant Literature in Grounded Theory

Within the field of grounded theory research, the use of existing literature represents a polemical and divisive issue (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). Whilst engagement with the literature prior to data collection is axiomatic of most strategies of inquiry, Glaser and Strauss (1967) explicitly argued against the practice. Others have echoed their concern, contending that knowledge of the research base placed the researcher at risk of “plough[ing] ahead along an established theoretical furrow … diminishing the potential for a wider repertoire of theoretical innovation” (Dey, 2007, p. 176). In the ensuing decades, the position of the founders – Strauss in particular – shifted significantly. Others also began to argue for the importance of an early review of the literature, contending that it oriented the researcher away from conceptual and methodological pitfalls (Urquhart, 2007), revealed how the phenomenon had been studied to date (Denzin, 2002), facilitated the iterative nature of the grounded theory method, and brought to bear unhelpful preconceptions (McCallin, 2003).

Within contemporary practice, there is a growing consensus that a middle ground – one that acknowledges the original ethos of grounded theory but also recognises the practical
need for, and advantages of early engagement with existing literature – be adopted (McCallin, 2003). In this thesis, engagement with the literature occurred prior to data collection in order to identify what work had been undertaken thus far, which issues were central to the field, and what knowledge gaps existed at that point in time. The literature review was central to the formation and justification of the research questions and facilitated a familiarity with the landscape of the subject (McMenamin, 2006).

2.2 Definitions

In setting the parameters of the current review, it was vital to consider how the key terms of policing and decision-making were defined. Over four decades ago Bittner (1974) observed that the police service was one of the best known yet least understood of public institutions. Even now this impasse rings true, how does one approach the task of defining the police? Is it to be done by charting the myriad factors that led to the establishment of the modern police service or does one approach the matter by exploring the diverse roles the service performs? It is beyond the scope of the current review to tread the path of this philosophical expedition (see Rowe, 2008 for a comprehensive discussion). It will suffice to specify here that policing refers to state-sponsored agencies that function at a local, state or federal level in accordance with the Victoria Police Act 2013. Policing does not include private agencies, intelligence organisations or crime commissions which serve somewhat disparate roles. The goal of any policing agency is assumed to be analogous to that of Victoria Police - to serve a specified community by upholding the law of the land and promoting a safe, secure, and orderly society (Victoria Police Act, 2013). In achieving this end goal, a combination of preventive, administrative, and repressive functions may be applied.

Whilst the police are identified throughout this thesis as one broad set of social actors, a significant degree of variation within the group is both anticipated and recognised. The
police as a service can be strikingly different in organisational form, function, resource base and capacity across agencies and regions. In using the term police, the intention is not to collapse this rich variation rather it is to draw attention to the dynamics through which broadly shared understandings of appropriate action are created.

In terms of decision-making, the concept is defined here as a dynamic process that unfolds amidst unpredictable and time pressured conditions. The decision-maker is considered to be an active agent, assessing the situation by searching for available cues, forming an interpretation, and ultimately producing an action outcome. It is assumed that this process does not occur in a linear fashion or through mathematical computations as proposed by rational choice theories. Rather the decision-maker is presumed to rely heavily on previous experience as well as various cognitive strategies in arriving at what is considered to be a satisfactory outcome. Evidently, police officers have a number of decision options available to them when they engage in resolving a police-citizen encounter. Such options include arrest, use of force, stops, citations and warnings. Although this is not an exhaustive list by any means it includes the decision options that were considered in the current review.

2.3 Method

In order to generate a comprehensive, standardised, and reliable evidence summary of factors contributing to police officer decision-making an international scope was adopted. The studies included were those published in English between the period of 1980 and 2015. The rationale for this time period pertained to the fact that studies preceding 1980 failed to take into account the introduction of problem-oriented policing1 (Goldstein, 1979) and the

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1 Problem-oriented policing is defined as a method of policing that aims to improve police effectiveness through examining and acting on the underlying conditions that give rise to community problems. The problem is the basic unit of police work, rather than crime, and is defined as something that can cause harm to citizens and the police. Responses emphasise prevention, going beyond the criminal justice system, and engaging with other public agencies, the community, and the private sector (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2004).
later implementation of community-oriented policing\(^2\) (Wilson & Kelling, 1982), which gradually gained acceptance as alternatives to the traditional policing model in the 1980s.

Four commonly used electronic databases were utilised (Emerald, Taylor & Francis, Wiley, and Sage). Searches were conducted using terms relevant to the review question i.e., police and Wilson for the review of Wilson’s typology; police, law enforcement, supervision, and patrol for the review of police supervision; police, law enforcement, and department size for the review of department size; police, law enforcement, race, racial profiling and arrest for the review of suspect race; demeanour, police, law enforcement, and arrest for the review of suspect demeanour; gender, sex, police, law enforcement, and arrest for the effect of suspect gender; mental illness, police, law enforcement, and arrest for the review of persons presenting with mental illness; training, police, and law enforcement for the review of the effect of officer training; experience, police, and law enforcement for the effect of officer experience. Terms depicting the police organisation (i.e., police, law enforcement) were paired with all other relevant target words - searching once in the field ‘abstract’, once in the field ‘keyword’ and once in the field ‘article title’. Reference lists of all relevant articles were searched to identify additional articles and textbooks. The author scanned all titles and abstracts prior to retrieval – primary and review articles were examined further for information pertinent to the current research questions. This search strategy was repeated annually to identify newly published articles.

Eligibility criteria addressed source (i.e., peer-reviewed sources), geography, and a quality appraisal – the framework for which was adapted from Long, Gofrey, Randall, Brettle, and Grant’s (2002) evaluation tool for mixed methods research (see Appendix 1). Studies were excluded if data collection solely relied on subjective, officer reports in

\(^2\) Community-oriented policing refers to the engagement of the police with the community through the restructuring of police organisations and daily activities of police officers. Central to the philosophy of community-oriented policing is the emphasis on effective working partnerships with the community (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2011).
response to constructed vignettes or computer simulations\textsuperscript{3}. Although this research was excluded due to methodological limitations it is nonetheless acknowledged that this research base has contributed significantly to the understanding of police officer decision-making (e.g., Stalans & Finn, 1995). Duplicates, book reviews, and content irrelevant articles were removed. Given the broad scope of factors that have been investigated and the diversity of measures utilised, formal meta-analytic methods were deemed as both impractical and inapplicable. Instead, the current review focused on qualitative synthesis of the relevant evidence-based literature. Research efforts using both quantitative and qualitative methods have attempted to explain police behaviour during interactions with citizens (e.g., Mastrofski, 1981; Worden & Shepard, 1996). Such investigations have found that legal variables (e.g., the seriousness of the alleged offence, the strength of evidence of criminal wrongdoing against the suspect, the presence of a weapon) have a strong and constant influence on formal police decisions (Novak, Frank, Smith, & Engel, 2002). The empirical evidence for the effect of extra-legal factors is considerably more mixed and controversial. As such, the current review places its focus on the latter.

2.4 Organisational Factors

All cultural systems consist of shared values, norms, beliefs, and expressive symbols (Peterson, 1979). Organisational culture is not a distinct entity, similarly characterised by beliefs, values, norms, and prototypes that are shared by its members (Jermier, Slocum, Fry, & Gaines, 1991). According to Jermier et al. (1991), official organisational culture and organisational subculture are disparate concepts. The former refers to an organisation’s

\textsuperscript{3} Participants are presented with digital colour photographs of Black and White persons that are paired with either a weapon or a neutral object. Participants are instructed that their task is to determine whether or not to shoot. Pictures of persons with a gun are deemed criminals, whilst those with a neutral object are innocent. The photographs appear on screen for approximately 630 milliseconds; participants must press a certain key designated for a shoot decision and a certain key for a don’t shoot decision (for an example see Plant & Peruche, 2005).
formal declarations of approved missions, goals, norms, and hierarchical structure communicated through mission statements, policies, and other formal documentation. The latter is the collective perception of official missions and standards of conduct held by the organisation’s members, portrayed and exemplified through the day-to-day practices and attitudes modelled by experienced members. The police subculture often emphasises that a combination of personal values, common sense, and rules developed collectively are needed to handle the stress that police officers face during their interactions with citizens and superiors (e.g., Cochran & Bromley, 2003).

The influence that organisational culture has on individual decision-makers remains a point of debate. Some researchers have found that police officers do consider organisational factors in their decision-making (e.g. Wilson, 1968), others have categorised organisational effects as minimal (Hassell, Zhao, & Maguire, 2003). In the sections that follow, previous studies that have addressed the effects of various police organisational factors on officer behaviour and decision-making are reviewed.

2.4.1 Wilson’s redux.

The cardinal assumption of all theoretical perspectives relating to the effect of organisational context on police officer decision-making states that organisational values and occupational norms influence the behaviour of individual officers. Wilson’s (1968) magnum opus provides the most comprehensive premise, formulating police organisational styles as catalysts of interorganisational variation and heterogeneous police departments. Wilson recognises the presence of internal limits regarding the supervisor’s capacity to direct, monitor, and enforce rule compliance by lower-ranking personnel. Whilst acknowledging the limits of bureaucratic control over discretionary behaviour, Wilson contends that police officer decision-making is the function and result of departmental goals. Central to his
argument is the concept of organisational ethos - constellations of organisational characteristics that create collective values and attitudes held by the organisation’s members. With these concepts in mind, Wilson (1968) proposed a typology of police officer types inclusive of the service, watchman, and legalistic styles.

The service style is characterised by a professional orientation, wherein administrative control is exerted through careful record keeping. The police officers display considerable sensitivity to community values, particularly to those held by politically influential community members. This community relations orientation is a pervasive feature in training curricula, performance evaluations, and leadership selection. According to Wilson, the service style of policing is often found in homogenous, middle-class communities where there is typically a pre-existing agreement among citizens regarding the definition of public order.

In contrast, the watchman style is characterised by the ubiquitous use of police discretion. This type of organisation lacks professional orientation, exemplified by limited levels in its personnel hierarchy. Record keeping practices are posited to be poor, often incomplete, and at times non-existent. The police agency’s culture and norms are instilled implicitly through the processes of recruitment and socialisation, maintaining a low profile and avoiding controversy is axiomatic. Overall, watchman departments are described as having flat bureaucratic structures, low budgets, little specialisations, and few rules.

Police officers based in legalistic style departments are said to be more likely to intervene formally given high levels of professionalism and vigorous commitment to enforcing the law. The commitment to the rule of law is accompanied and actualised by strict guidelines and limits pertaining to the use of discretion. Legalistic departments are highly complex, bureaucratic agencies that rely heavily on central administrative authority and extensive rules. The supervisors demand high arrest and ticketing rates, not only to adhere to
principles of law and justice but to reduce public suspicion of corruption and shield against criticism.

Wilson’s conceptualisation of the police structure is an eminent schema within the policing literature, routinely referred to as the classic and preeminent theory of organisational effects on police behaviour (Walker & Katz, 2008). In light of its acclaim and longstanding praise, comparatively little research has been conducted to assess the theory’s contentions (see Table 1).

Since the publication of Wilson's seminal work, several U.S. scholars have attempted to consolidate his findings. First, Smith and Klein (1983) examined the effects of various organisational properties on arrest decisions, including levels of bureaucratisation and professionalisation. The analysis indicated that the degree of bureaucratisation directly influenced the probability of arrest, such that arrest rates were greater in bureaucratised than professionalised departments. Similarly, Crank (1990; 1992) identified that the city-manager type of municipal governance (appointed-mayor/bureaucratised) was associated with greater police legalism for certain categories of crime when compared to mayor council governments (elected-mayor/professionalised). However, failure to differentiate the two styles of local government structure as done by Wilson significantly reduced the generalisability of these findings (Zhao & Hassell, 2005).

The majority of the research has identified the presence of a high level of variation within police departments (see Table 1), claiming that “city options tend to be congruent with a particular political culture, but do not appear constrained to be so” (Langworthy, 1985, p. 98). This finding has been echoed by a collection of more recent U.S. studies (Chappell, MacDonald & Manz, 2006; Hassell et al., 2003; Liederbach & Travis, 2008; Zhao, He, &

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4 Studies investigating the impact of scale of patrol (i.e., number of officers serving a particular neighbourhood) were excluded given their focus on the effect of organisational size rather than organisational culture and context.
Lovrich, 2006; Zhao, Ren, & Lovrich, 2010) which failed to provide support for Wilson’s contention. Little support for a relationship between local political culture and police practices has led scholars to speculate as to the effect of major police reform, increase in crime rates, and the expanding influence of the federal government on the applicability of Wilson’s findings to modern policing. As Chappell et al. (2006) indicated, "real police agencies do not fall squarely within only one of Wilson's typologies … most police departments exhibit a cross-section of characteristics" (p. 303).

Despite the lack of evidence in support of Wilson’s typology, numerous researchers have cautioned against dismissing his theory. Some emphasise methodological departures from Wilson as warranting a hesitance to move towards falsification. Others posit that the changes evident in contemporary police structure and its organisational nature have made replication of the original test impossible. These policing scholars suggest that the lack of support for Wilson’s typology attests to the fact that times have changed and that the police organisation no longer holds direct ties to the political landscape. The relevance of Wilson’s typology to the Australian context remains untested as does the relationship between the police and the political sphere.
Table 1. Review of studies investigating Wilson’s typology.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author/s</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Study Quality</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chappell, A. T., MacDonald, J. M., &amp; Manz, P. W.</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: 1997 Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics; 1997 FBI Uniform Crime Reports.</td>
<td>182 municipal police agencies.</td>
<td>The application of community-oriented ($\beta = .06; p &gt; .05$) and problem-oriented policing ($\beta = .09; p &gt; .05$) strategies, the ratio of field to administrative personnel ($\beta = -.05; p &gt; .05$), and the presence of a police union ($\beta = .09; p &gt; .05$) were not significantly related to arrest – contrary to Wilson’s contention.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crank, J. P.</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Survey: questionnaire measuring craftsmanship and professionalism.</td>
<td>8 municipal police agencies; 205 police officers.</td>
<td>Rejection of craftsmanship and widespread adherence to the values of professionalism identified - contrary to Wilson’s contention.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crank, J. P.</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: 1986 FBI arrest statistics; Illinois Crime Reports; Illinois State Police Index Offenses; 1986 Municipal Yearbook; 1980 US Census of General Population Characteristics.</td>
<td>392 municipal police agencies.</td>
<td>Commission type municipal governments did not differ significantly in legalistic behaviour from other types of municipal governments. City Manager governments displayed more legalistic behaviour than Mayor Council governments for aggravated assault ($\beta = .10; p &lt; .05$), burglary ($\beta = .14; p &lt; .05$), and theft ($\beta = .10; p &lt; .05$) - consistent with Wilson’s contention.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hassell, K. D., Zhao, J., &amp; Maguire, E. R</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Mixed Methods: questionnaire addressing organisational structure; 1997 Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics.</td>
<td>401 police agencies.</td>
<td>Professionalism not a significant predictor of the extent of rules and policies present in a police department ($\beta = -0.11; p &gt; .05$),</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>Sample Size</td>
<td>Findings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Liederbach, J., &amp; Travis L. F.</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Observational: 14-month systematic social observation of 213 police officers over 4,813 hours in South-western Ohio during 1999 and 2000.</td>
<td>20 police agencies; 213 police officers; 583 observations.</td>
<td>Type of election ($X^2 (2, N = 20) = .95, p = .62$), type of government ($X^2 (2, N = 17) = .23, p = .89$), and local political culture ($X^2 (4, N = 16) = 3.59, p = .46$), were not significantly associated with police style (legalistic, service, watchman). Population ($X^2 (2, N = 20) = 8.80, p = .01$) and median household income ($X^2 (2, N = 20) = 6.80, p = .03$) were significantly associated with police style, with less wealthy communities more likely to exhibit a watchman style – contrary to Wilson’s contention.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Smith, D. A., & Klein, J. R. | 1983 | US | Secondary Data Analysis: ‘Police Services Study’ database comprising of 24 police agencies, 900 observed shifts and 5,688 observed police-suspect encounters in St. Louise, MO; | 950 police-suspect encounters. | Probability of arrest more likely in high bureaucratic departments ($\beta = .11, p < .05$) and less likely in low bureaucratic departments ($\beta = .06, p < .10$) supporting Wilson’s contention that departmental styles...
Zhao, J., & Hassell, K. 2005 US Mixed Methods: questionnaire addressing organisational structure and community policing practices; 1992 Census of Government; 1998 Uniform Crime Reports; 1990 US Census of Population; 1990 US Census of Population and Housing. 304 police agencies. Professional government a significant predictor of larceny arrest rates ($\beta = -.22, p < .05$) and disorderly conduct ($\beta = -.18, p < .05$) opposite the hypothesised direction. Professional government not a significant predictor of DWI ($\beta = -.07, p > .05$), and drunkenness ($\beta = .00, p > .05$). arrest rates – contrary to Wilson’s contention.

Zhao, J., He, N., & Lovrich, N. 2006 US Mixed Methods: survey; 1993, 1996, and 2000 Uniform Crime Reports; 1990 and 2000 US Census of Population. 185 municipal police agencies. Professional government not a significant predictor of larceny ($\beta = .49, p > .05$), DWI ($\beta = .51, p > .05$), drunkenness ($\beta = 1.11, p > .05$), and disorderly conduct ($\beta = .99, p > .05$). arrest rates – contrary to Wilson’s contention.

Zhao, J., Ren, L., & Lovrich, N. 2010 US Secondary Data Analysis: survey; 1993, 1996, and 2000 Uniform Crime Reports; 1990 and 2000 US Census of Population. 223 police agencies. No significant effect of local political culture on organisational structure in terms of daytime patrol beats ($\beta = -8.02, p > .05$) and special units ($\beta = -.36, p > .05$).
2.4.2 Pulling rank.

Prior to the accession of the community-oriented policing era, police supervisors performed traditional roles of supervision: monitoring subordinate officers’ activities and enforcing departmental rules and regulations (Manning, 1997; Van Maanen, 1983). This type of supervision was somewhat akin to transactional leadership – the fundamental premise being that of quid pro quo (Allen & Maxfield, 1983; Rubinstein, 1973). With the evolution of public management within the public sector, a cultural shift also occurred in police organisations. Transactional dynamics became incompatible with new and increasingly complex system structures (e.g., community-oriented policing, problem-oriented policing), leaving police supervisors facing challenges that demanded the development of contemporary supervisory skills. This transition altered the definition of supervision, field supervisors became coaches and mentors (Goldstein, 1990), resource providers (Dantzker, 1999), performance evaluators (Peak, Glensor, & Gaines, 1999), disciplinarians, and strategic planners. Through these assorted roles the first-line supervisor is assumed to have control over the actions of subordinate officers.

One of the earliest examinations of this widely accepted notion was reported by Allen (1982). Using observational data, Allen investigated the effect of supervision on officer activities. The analysis indicated that the ratio of supervisors to officers had a moderate effect on how long officers spent at encounters, such that greater time was spent at an encounter in the presence of a supervisor. However, supervisor presence did not have an effect on the number of tasks officers completed (officer output). Allen’s conclusion that supervisors may not have a substantial effect on officer behaviour has been replicated elsewhere (e.g., Brown, 1988), suggesting that the solidarity of police work and the supervisor’s dependence on the actions of subordinates may limit the scope of his or her influence.
Researchers examining survey-based data have also reported little to no supervisory influence on officer activities (Allen & Maxfield, 1983; Brown, 1988; Mastrofski, Ritti, & Snipes, 1994; see Table 2). “The admitted reluctance of field supervisors to closely watch the behaviour of patrolmen is corroborated by the perceptions of patrolmen”, giving rise to the belief that “the routine actions of field supervisors have but a marginal impact on the way they [police officers] use their discretion” (Brown, 1988, p. 121). Some differences relating to size of department have been noted, indicating that supervisors working in smaller departments may be more likely to observe police officer behaviour and intervene actively in an incident (Brown, 1988).

Using the same data as Allen (1982), Smith (1984) classified police departments based on their level of professionalism and bureaucratisation. The findings revealed that the presence of a supervisor at an encounter significantly increased the probability of an arrest only for militaristic⁵ and legalistic style police agencies. This effect was found to be considerably smaller in fraternal⁶ agencies and non-significant within service style agencies. Smith (1984) hypothesised that supervisors working within legalistic and militaristic departments were more likely to utilise formal avenues of intervention, whilst those working in service style agencies preferred to utilise informal resolution methods as a means of upholding community-oriented policing principles. Further investigation into organisational and supervisory styles has failed to replicate this association (Engel, 2000).

One notable study was that conducted by Brewer, Wilson, and Beck (1994) who investigated supervisory effectiveness within an Australian police force. The findings suggested that the provision of monitoring and feedback by supervisors increased effective team performance (as rated across 12 efficiency dimensions). Monitoring via vetting

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⁵ Smith (1984) defined militaristic police agencies as having a nonprofessional, bureaucratic style.

⁶ Smith (1984) defined fraternal police agencies as having a nonprofessional, nonbureaucratic style.
crime/arrest reports and court briefs had no effect, whilst mentoring via collecting verbal reports from subordinates regarding policing activities was associated with more effective team performance. This association was shown to be particularly pronounced when monitoring involved the provision of some form of encouragement and/or instructional feedback. The authors concluded that supervisors who spent more time engaged in solitary activities were unable to effect team performance as fewer interactions with subordinates equated to fewer opportunities for monitoring and feedback.

The minimal effect that supervisors have over police officers has been proposed, at least in part, to be the result of personal ties established and maintained within the team (Van Maanen, 1983). Van Maanen hypothesised that the police supervisor has access to a number of resources to control subordinate behaviour including: (i) personnel brokering through the assignment of police officers to particular tasks, (ii) institutional display and documentation, and (iii) the mobilisation of expressive and symbolic tasks that induce motivation. Evidently, there is wide scope within the police culture for supervisory control to develop, however Van Maanen (1983) contended this is a prerogative that needs to be earned by the supervisor and is not necessarily inherent.

Overall, the effects of supervision have generally been found to vary considerably and to be small in magnitude (see Table 2). It is difficult to comment on precisely how supervisors impact on subordinate performance given that the effects of supervision have been examined across different tasks and organisations with little investigation of how supervisory practice may be shaped by subordinate responses. Also of note is the limited research available within the Australian context, making it difficult to infer any conclusions regarding the effect supervisors have on subordinate officers within Australian policing practices.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author/s</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Study Quality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allen, D. N.</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: ‘Police Services Study’ database comprising of 24 police agencies, 900 observed shifts and 5,688 observed police-suspect encounters in St. Louise, MO; Rochester, NY; Tampa and St. Petersburg, FL during 1977.</td>
<td>833 supervisor-officer contacts.</td>
<td>For each encounter with a supervisor present approximately 45 minutes more was spent at the encounter. Each supervisor/officer contact during the shift increased encounter time by approximately 2 minutes. Every additional appearance of a supervisor at an encounter scene related to 23% fewer encounters initiated by the patrol officer.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brewer, N., Wilson, C., &amp; Beck, K.</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Mixed Methods: supervisory effectiveness measured via superior officer’s ratings of the performance of each patrol Sergeant’s team; Operant Supervisory Taxonomy and Index used to observe and measure supervisor behaviour.</td>
<td>20 police supervisors.</td>
<td>Supervisors of higher-ranked teams spent significantly more time monitoring performance ($r(18)$ = .40, $p &lt; .05$); collecting verbal reports on patrol activities ($r(18)$ = .47, $p &lt; .05$); providing neutral feedback ($r(18)$ = .51, $p &lt; .05$); and doing paperwork ($r(18)$ = .48, $p &lt; .05$).</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown, M. K.</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Mixed Methods: observation of police-suspect encounters in Los Angeles, Redondo Beach and Inglewood conducted during 1972 and 1973; survey administered to policemen working in Los Angeles Police Department, Inglewood Police Department and</td>
<td>198 patrolmen and 57 field supervisors.</td>
<td>36% of patrolmen reported that their behaviour was ‘often’ or ‘very often’ observed by a supervisor; 11% reported that supervisors ‘often’ or ‘very often’ intervened in an incident. 74% of patrolmen reported that they were allowed ‘more than enough’ discretion; 22% reported</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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</table>
This examination utilised a one-tailed test of significance, allowing for a rejection of the null hypothesis with a less extreme result than that required by a two-tailed test. Authors did not justify the decisions to use a one-tailed test with this particular category; all other behavioural categories and subcategories were tested with a two-tailed test of significance.

Active supervisors were defined as those engaged in high levels of patrol and supervisory functions in the field.

Redondo Beach Police Department.

239 police officers; 81 supervisors; 1,487 non-traffic-related suspects; 581 traffic suspects.

Odds of using force on a suspect increased by 2.06 when the officer had an ‘active’ supervisor (for non-traffic-related offences). No significant effect of supervisory style on arrest of non-traffic-related suspects or the use of force or arrest of traffic-related suspects.

Supervisor’s DUI priority was not a significant predictor of arrest ($\beta = -0.07, p = .12$). Opportunity and capability accounted for 17% of the variance in arrest residuals.

Presence of supervisor significantly increased probability of arrest ($t = 5.13$) for certain police agencies. In militaristic and legalistic style police agencies arrest more likely to occur in presence of supervisor ($t = 4.27; t = 4.09$ respectively), in fraternal and service style police agencies presence of supervisor had no significant effect on the probability of arrest ($t = 2.15; t = 1.30$ respectively).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Study Type</th>
<th>Sample Description</th>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Smith, D. A., &amp; Klein, J. R.</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: ‘Police Services Study’ database comprising of 24 police agencies, 900 observed shifts and 5,688 observed police-suspect encounters in St. Louise, MO; Rochester, NY; Tampa and St. Petersburg, FL during 1977.</td>
<td>333 interpersonal disputes. Probability of arrest more likely in the presence of a supervisor ($\beta = .21$, $p &lt; .05$); percentage of arrest when supervisor present and observing was 22.7; when supervisor participated as an equal 16.2% of suspects were arrested; when supervisor took charge 52.4% of suspects were arrested.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Van Maanen, J.</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Qualitative: analysis of observational data of an unspecified number of police officers in a de-identified district.</td>
<td>Unspecified. Sergeant utilised personnel brokering, institutional display and documentation and mobilisation of effort to control the behaviour of patrolmen.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9 Did not specify sample data. The exclusion of location pertained to the de-identification of the interviewed officers. Study included in this review as qualitative analysis revealed a number of key themes.
2.4.3 Does size matter?

The desire to consolidate small police stations first arose in the U.S. during the 1930s, and then again in the 1960s and 1970s (Altshuler, 1970; Walker, 1977). Government reformers who advocated for the merging of small police stations argued that it would result in improved police professionalism, productivity, and service quality due to its cost-efficiency and the employment of highly trained professionals (Walker, 1977). Conversely, the community-oriented policing movement warned of the local issues that may arise from the consolidation process - “consolidating police services would decrease or eliminate the close contact that exists between the police and the community. Authority of local police officers would be lessened and they would lose their effectiveness” (Horgan, 1980, p. 2). Propositions to merge police stations seldom come to fruition, primarily due to the fear of a loss of community identity and autonomy (Falcone, Wells, & Weisheit, 2002). Whilst small-scale consolidations have taken place, these have been of an insufficient proportion to encapsulate the reality of the challenges and changes that may transpire. Consequently, research in this area has relied heavily on cross-sectional comparisons of variously sized stations.

The seminal work undertaken by Ostrom and colleagues commended small police stations, finding that small- and medium-sized U.S. police stations performed more effectively than their larger counterparts (Ostrom & Parks, 1973; Ostrom, Baugh, Guarasci, Parks, & Whitaker, 1973; Ostrom & Whitaker, 1974). Later work corroborated Ostrom’s contentions, indicating that small police stations provided the community with greater accessibility and interpersonal familiarity (Crank & Wells, 1991; Schafer, Burruss, & Giblin, 2009; see Table 3) and outperformed their larger counterparts in clearance rates for various major offences (Cordner, 1989). Paradoxically, some researchers found higher arrest rates within larger police stations (Brown, 1988; Mastrofski, 1981). Significant debate ensued
regarding whether this was a reflection of station size or the type of crime that was being patrolled. This has since been substantiated by the finding that smaller stations demonstrate higher arrest rates for breaches of peace and drunk driving offence whilst larger stations show higher arrest rates for theft-related offences (Langworthy, 1983; Mastrofski, Ritti, & Hoffmaster, 1987).

Many of the above reviewed sources referred to ‘large’, ‘medium’ and ‘small’ police stations. However, upon closer inspection it was noted that the parameters of these categories were often arbitrarily defined (Sims, 1988). The specific number of sworn personnel required to classify a station as large, medium or small varied widely across studies and limited the generalisability of the findings. Nevertheless, there is an overall indication that stations of varying size enforce particular laws with greater activity than others, indicating that the effect of size may be more a result of the offence being considered. This is in relation to the U.S. context and to the researcher’s knowledge no attempt has yet been made to investigate the practices of small-, medium- and large-sized police stations in Australia. This is particularly surprising given the vast differences in station size across urban and rural Australia.
Table 3. Review of studies investigating the effects of police station size on police officer decision-making.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author/s</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Study Quality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brown, M. K.</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Mixed Methods: observation of police-suspect encounters in Los Angeles, Redondo Beach and Inglewood conducted during 1972 and 1973; survey administered to policemen working in Los Angeles Police Department, Inglewood Police Department and Redondo Beach Police Department.</td>
<td>198 patrolmen and 57 field supervisors.</td>
<td>Rates of homicide, forcible rape, burglary and grand theft were higher in large police departments than in small police departments. Rates of armed robbery were higher in small departments than in large police departments.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cordner, G. W.</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: Uniform Crime Reports 1985; Maryland State Police database (clearance rates).</td>
<td>84 police agencies.</td>
<td>Region accounted for almost all of the explained variance in clearance rates ($\beta = .54, t(84) = 5.33, p &lt; .01$); with clearance rates in metropolitan areas being substantially lower (18%-23%) than in nonmetropolitan areas (29%-30%).</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crank, J. P., &amp; Wells, E. I.</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: Illinois Crime Reports 1986; Illinois Local Governmental Law Enforcement Officers’ Training Board 1985.</td>
<td>399 police agencies.</td>
<td>Size of department associated with significant changes in supervisory ratio ($\beta = .01, p &lt; .001$) and organisational height ($\beta = .01, p &lt; .001$); increases in organisational size found to contribute to height among small – ($\beta = .12, p &lt; .001$) and medium-sized ($\beta = .03, p &lt; .001$) agencies; increases in organisational size found to contribute to supervisory ratio in small- ($\beta = .07$,</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10 Height defined as the number of ranks in the organisation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Langworthy, R. H.</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: data presented by Ostrom, Parks, and Whitaker; Kansas City, Missouri Police Department administrative survey.</td>
<td>Agencies with more than 151 sworn officers devoted the same proportion of officers to patrol as those agencies with 21-50 sworn officers; an increase in size of agency associated with lower citizen to police officer ratio ($\beta = -0.26, p &lt; 0.05$).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mastrofski, S. D.</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: ‘Police Services Study’ database comprising of 24 police agencies, 900 observed shifts and 5,688 observed police-suspect encounters in St. Louise, MO; Rochester, NY; Tampa and St. Petersburg, FL during 1977.</td>
<td>An increase of 10,000 in PAA population decreased officer familiarity with citizens ($\beta = -0.67, p &lt; 0.05$); a reduction of 10,000 in PAA size increased the chances of a victim being comforted by 1% and increased the probability of arrest ($\beta = 0.06, p &lt; 0.05$). Dramatic changes in the scale of patrol are required to produce modest changes in behaviour. The enlargement or reduction of scale must be in units of 100,000 not 10,000.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mastrofski, S. D., Ritti, R. R., &amp; Hoffmaster, D.</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Mixed Methods: questionnaire addressing personal characteristics and attitudes; participant observation of officers on patrol; in-depth interviews; collateral.</td>
<td>Willingness to make DUI arrests decreased as department size increased ($\beta = -0.38, p = 0.02$).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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The scale of police patrol in a study neighbourhood is indicated by the population of the primary assignment area (PAA) of officers serving that neighbourhood.
2.5 Offender Characteristics

Social scientists have often assumed the existence of a gap between how the law operates in theory opposed to reality, accordingly concentrating their efforts on discovering discriminatory practices by those who administer it (e.g., Hagan & Nagel, 1982). Legal realists recognise the presence of the gap but conceptualise it disparately. The gap is presumed to be structural - a consequence of the inability of the general rules of law to dictate specific outcomes without the use of discretion. Legal realists ask whether discretion operates in discriminatory ways, and if so, to what extent do decision-makers violate the principles of equality before the law? A large body of international literature has sought to resolve this predicament by exploring officer decision-making during police-suspect encounters.

Early research in the field provided ethnographic descriptions of police work, succeeded by more quantitative analyses designed to investigate the influence of extra-legal factors. Extending from the knowledge that officers utilise their discretion, researchers expressed doubt in the assumption that police officer judgment and decision-making is founded entirely upon legal considerations (i.e., evidence of guilt). Consequently, interest in the influence of extra-legal factors perpetually expanded, growing to encompass suspect race, ethnicity, demeanour, mental health and a depository of other characteristics. Although extra-legal variables were found to explain a relatively small portion of the variance in the behaviour of police officers, the controversy lay in the legality of arrest when such variables constituted grounds for arrest. Four decades on and the debate remains. Some claim that “the influence of race and other extra-legal factors is diminishing” amidst contemporary

---

12 One challenge in reviewing the literature of extra-legal influences on arrest is the absence of any uniform definition of what constitutes an extra-legal factor. To some extent, this is the result of the extensive variability across jurisdictions in designating formal legal factors. What we can specify is what it does not encapsulate. The term “extra-legal” is not used synonymously with “illegal” or “inappropriate”, rather it refers to that which is not specifically prescribed in the relevant statutory law. Traditionally studied extra-legal factors include offender race and ethnicity, with other characteristics being considered in more recent times.

2.5.1 Race and the police.

The discretionary nature of police work has created widespread concern regarding whether the law is applied fairly and impartially by the gatekeepers of the criminal justice system. The question of whether police officers target persons on the basis of race is increasingly being debated by policing officials, civil rights groups, and laypersons - most of whom proclaim that improper or prejudiced race-based decision-making continues to plague policing practice. The fundamental contention holds that police officers target non-White persons when conducting traffic stops or field interrogations due to the activation of negative stereotypes - stereotypes comprising of characteristics such as aggressiveness, violence, and criminality (e.g., Brigham, 1973; Devine & Elliot, 1995).

The pertinent nature of this issue is exemplified by the diverse legislation enacted to endorse compliance with the duty of strict enforcement. For example, in February of 2013 Victoria Police announced that it would examine its policies and practices amidst claims of racial discrimination and profiling. In the 2014 report entitled Equality is not the same…, the organisation committed to developing and implementing education reform to target “unconscious bias, immersion, human rights, cultural awareness, and enhanced communication training” (Victoria Police, 2014b, p. 12). Evidently, attempts to regulate police discretion are ubiquitous. However, scholars and practitioners continue to attest to its existence and inevitable exercise.

International studies (particularly those conducted in the U.S.) examining the effect of race on the probability of arrest have identified disparities in the treatment of Black and White suspects, to the disadvantage of the former (Alpert et al., 2007; Brown & Frank, 2005;
Taking into account offender deference, seriousness of injuries sustained by the victim (Smith & Visher, 1981), offender’s history of violence (Bachman & Coker, 1995), and interaction-phase crime (Brown & Frank, 2005) failed to ameliorate the race effect in some instances (Lundman, 1998; Smith, Visher, & Davidson, 1984). Indeed, this compilation of literature suggests that Black suspects are arrested more frequently under circumstances that do not constitute sufficient grounds for prosecution (Gelman, Fagan, & Kiss, 2005; Smith & Petrocelli, 2001), a finding supported by Kochel, Wilson, and Mastrofski’s (2011) recent meta-analysis of the effect of suspect race on officers’ arrest decisions.

More sophisticated analyses (Mastrofski, Worden, & Snipes, 1995; Smith & Visher, 1981) have attributed this discrepancy to other legal and extra-legal factors including: Black complainants lobbying more frequently for formal police action (Smith, 1987), Black suspects presenting more prominently with a disrespectful demeanour, and various legal factors (e.g., Engel, 2000). Null findings are commonly yielded across time, research sites, and data collection methods (Berk & Loseke, 1980; Engel & Silver, 2001; Klinger, 1996; Mastrofski et al., 1995; Petrocelli, Piquero, & Smith, 2003; Smith, 1984; Smith & Klein, 1984; Worden & Pollitz, 1984), with most reporting no significant association between suspect race and the probability of arrest. Adding further to the established ambiguity is the frequent identification of an inverse effect (D’Alessio & Stolzenberg, 2003; Smith, 1987), wherein White suspects (vs. Black suspects) were found to be more likely to be arrested for various offence categories.

The existing international research on racial bias in arrest rates has failed to clarify the race/arrest relationship. Some of the literature suggests that the association between race and arrest is a spurious one and that taking into effect differing levels of antagonism or seriousness of the offence eliminates the association. Others, however, have yielded evidence
to the contrary (e.g., Gelman et al., 2005; Kochel et al., 2011). Given vast differences in how variables are measured and what legal and extra-legal factors are taken into consideration has meant that discerning the relationship between race and arrest has been, and continues to be, a problematic one. While previous U.S.-based studies are informative, the extent of the generalisability of findings to Australia is not yet.
Table 4. Review of studies investigating the effect of suspect race on police officer decision-making.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author/s</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Study Quality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alpert, G. P., Dunham, R. G., &amp; Smith, M. R.</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Systematic Observation: observations of traffic and violator patterns at selected intersections; demographic data collected from the US Census Bureau, 2000.</td>
<td>8 police districts; 400 hours of observation.</td>
<td>2% of White and Hispanic suspects were arrested after a traffic stop compared to 3.7% of Black suspects.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berk, S. F., &amp; Loseke, D. R.</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: domestic disturbance incidents provided through a special unit of the District Attorney’s office of Santa Barbara County. 730 incident reports were gathered during 1978 and 1979.</td>
<td>405 incident reports.</td>
<td>Race did not have a significant effect on the probability of arrest ($\beta = .02, p &gt; .05$).</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Methodology Description</td>
<td>Key Findings</td>
<td>Strength of Evidence</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>D’Alessio, S. J., &amp; Stolzenberg, L.</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: ‘National Incident-Based Reporting System’ database comprising of 2,852 reporting jurisdictions in 17 states during 1999.</td>
<td>9,551 cases of forcible rape; 12,315 cases of robbery; 60,249 cases of aggravated assault; 253,504 cases of simple assault.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engel, R. S.</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: ‘Project on Policing Neighborhoods’ database comprising of 7,443 observed police-suspect encounters in Indianapolis and St. Petersburg, FL conducted during 1996 and 1997.</td>
<td>239 police officers; 81 supervisors; 1,487 non-traffic-related suspects; 581 traffic suspects.</td>
<td>Race did not have a significant effect on the probability of arrest for either non-traffic ($\beta = -0.21, p &gt; .05$) or traffic ($\beta = -0.21, p &gt; .05$) suspects.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engel, R. S., &amp; Silver, E.</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: ‘Project on Policing Neighborhoods’ (POPN) dataset comprising of 1,849 observed police-suspect encounters in Indianapolis and St. Petersburg during 1996-1997; Police Services Study (PSS) database comprising of 24 police agencies, 900 observed shifts and 5,688 observed police-suspect encounters in St. Louise, MO; Rochester, NY; Tampa and St. Petersburg, FL during 1977.</td>
<td>1,289 misdemeanour offences; 1,578 misdemeanour offences.</td>
<td>Race did not have a significant effect on the probability of arrest for either the POPN ($\beta = -0.29, p &gt; .05$) or PSS ($\beta = -0.33, p &gt; .05$) datasets.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Despite the strength of the analytic method used in this study, some concern regarding its sample must be noted. The authors utilised a high percentage of unpublished doctoral theses in their estimation of effect. This produces a number of concerns, including limited exposure to the peer-review process and restricted access to the original work.


Klinger, D. A. 1996 US Secondary Data Analysis: ‘Metro Dade Police Department Dispute Study’ database comprising of 245 observed disputes in Metro Dade County during 1985 and 1986. 245 disputes. Race did not have a significant effect on the probability of arrest ($\beta = -0.08$, $p > .05$). Medium

Kochel, T. R., Wilson, D. B., & Mastrofski, S. D. 2011 US Meta-analysis. 27 independent data sets. Minority suspects 30% more likely to be arrested than White suspects. Medium

Lundman, R. J. 1998 US Systematic Observation: for 15 months starting in June 1970, seven observers accompanied police officers in Midwest City for a total of 365 eight-hour shifts involving 2,000 police-suspect encounters. 100 police-suspect encounters. Black drunk drivers were 18% more likely to be arrested than their White and Native American counterparts. Medium

Mastrofski, S. D., Worden, R. E., & Snipes, J. B. 1995 US Systematic Observation: researchers accompanied officers on patrol beats, taking brief notes on officer activities and encounters. 120 officers; 1,300 observation hours. Race did not have a significant effect on the probability of arrest (odds ratio = 0.58, $p > .05$). Medium

Novak, K. J., & Engel, R. S. 2005 US Secondary Data Analysis: ‘Cincinnati Police Department Community Policing Study’ database comprising of 2,671 observed police-suspect encounters. 617 police-suspect encounters. Non-White suspects were 0.85 times more likely to be arrested than their White counterparts. Medium

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13 Despite the strength of the analytic method used in this study, some concern regarding its sample must be noted. The authors utilised a high percentage of unpublished doctoral theses in their estimation of effect. This produces a number of concerns, including limited exposure to the peer-review process and restricted access to the original work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Study Methodology</th>
<th>Sample Size</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Petrocelli, M., Piquero, A. R., &amp; Smith, M. R.</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: traffic stop data collected by the Richmond Police Department from January to March 2000.</td>
<td>4,782 traffic stops.</td>
<td>Black suspects searched at a higher rate ($\beta = .57, p &lt; .05$), however arrested less frequently ($\beta = -.44, p &lt; .01$) than their White counterparts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith, D. A.</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: ‘Police Services Study’ database comprising of 24 police agencies, 900 observed shifts and 5,688 observed police-suspect encounters in St. Louise, MO; Rochester, NY; Tampa and St. Petersburg, FL during 1977.</td>
<td>1,139 police-suspect encounters.</td>
<td>Race did not have a significant effect on the probability of arrest ($t = 1.47$).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith, D. A.</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: ‘Police Services Study’ database comprising of 24 police agencies, 900 observed shifts and 5,688 observed police-suspect encounters in St. Louise, MO; Rochester, NY; Tampa and St. Petersburg, FL during 1977.</td>
<td>102 police-suspect encounters.</td>
<td>Race of the disputing dyad influenced how police handled the encounter. In violent encounters among Non-whites the probability of arrest was .16, the estimated probability of arrest for encounters involving Whites was .59.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith, D. A., &amp; Klein, J. R.</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: ‘Police Services Study’ database comprising of 24 police agencies, 900 observed shifts and 5,688 observed police-suspect encounters in St. Louise, MO; Rochester, NY; Tampa and St. Petersburg, FL during 1977.</td>
<td>333 interpersonal disputes.</td>
<td>Race did not have a significant effect on the probability of arrest ($t = .17$).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Findings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Smith, D. A., &amp; Visher, C. A</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: ‘Police Services Study’ database comprising of 24 police agencies, 900 observed shifts and 5,688 observed police-suspect encounters in St. Louise, MO; Rochester, NY; Tampa and St. Petersburg, FL during 1977.</td>
<td>Black suspects were more likely to be arrested even when controlling for the effects of suspect demeanour and various suspect characteristics ($z = 2.23$).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith, D. A., Visher, C. A., &amp; Davidson, L. A.</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: ‘Police Services Study’ database comprising of 24 police agencies, 900 observed shifts and 5,688 observed police-suspect encounters in St. Louise, MO; Rochester, NY; Tampa and St. Petersburg, FL during 1977.</td>
<td>Race found to be a significant determinant of arrest when other aspects of the encounter were controlled for ($t = 2.03$). This race effect was eliminated in encounters involving both suspects and victims ($t = 1.20$).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith, M. R., &amp; Petrocelli, M.</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis; utilised traffic stop data collected by Richmond Police Department from January 2000 to March 2000. Officer vehicles were equipped with mobile data computers that required the officer to enter preselected information on the suspect and the stop; US bureau of the Census, 1990 for overall population figures.</td>
<td>The ratio of stops to arrests was higher among minorities than it was for Whites. Police stopped 1.8 minorities for every ticket issued or arrest made compared with 1.5 Whites.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Sample Details</td>
<td>Findings</td>
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<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Visher, C. A.</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: ‘Police Services Study’ database comprising of 24 police agencies, 900 observed shifts and 5,688 observed police-suspect encounters in St. Louise, MO; Rochester, NY; Tampa and St. Petersburg, FL during 1977.</td>
<td>785 police-suspect encounters.</td>
<td>Black male ($t = 1.65$) and Black female ($t = 2.09$) suspects were more likely to be arrested than their White counterparts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withrow, B. L.</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: Wichita police department database comprising of 37,454 police-citizen encounters in Wichita during 2001; participating police officers collected data following every police/citizen contact of an official nature; US bureau of the Census, 2001 for overall population figures.</td>
<td>37,454 police-suspect encounters.</td>
<td>Black and Hispanic suspects were 1.84 and 1.28 (respectively) times more likely to be arrested during a police stop compared to their White counterparts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.5.2 Demeanour or crime?

The widely held assumption that hostile suspects are more likely to be arrested than their deferential counterparts arose from early qualitative research (Westley, 1970) and subsequent quantitative analyses of observational data. Between 1980 and 1987 an array of studies reported that the likelihood of arrest increased as the level of deference displayed by suspects’ decreased (Black, 1980; Smith, 1984, 1987; Smith & Klein, 1983, 1984; Smith & Visher, 1981; Smith, Visher, & Davidson, 1984; Visher, 1983; Worden & Pollitz, 1984). The magnitude of the estimated effect was substantial, leading suspect antagonistic behaviour to be conceptualised as an indicator of the need for formal means of control (i.e., arrest).

Strong objection for this proposition came from Klinger (1994) who contended that the cited research failed to sufficiently control for crime and erred in the measurement of demeanour. The author yielded statistical support for his criticism, finding that the effect of disrespectful demeanour on officer decision-making was small in magnitude and statistically insignificant. The majority of subsequent analyses, however, continued to demonstrate significant findings regarding the influence of demeanour on arrest (Brown & Frank, 2005; Crawford, 2000; Engel & Silver, 2001; Engel, Sobol, & Worden, 2000; Lundman, 1994, 1998; Mastrofski et al., 1995; Novak & Engel, 2005; Novak et al., 2002; Swatt, 2002; Worden & Shepard, 1996; see Table 5), with some noted exceptions (Mastrofski, Snipes, & Parks, 2000; Terrill & Mastrofski, 2002).

In their reanalysis of the Police Services Study (PSS) database, Worden and Shepard (1996) failed to find any evidence to suggest that previous findings were biased, either by the operationalisation of demeanour or by the failure to control more adequately for pre-intervention and interaction-phase crime. In Klinger’s (1996) own reanalysis of his 1994 investigation a threshold effect was identified. Whilst three demeanour measures did not exert a significant effect on the likelihood of arrest a measure of extreme hostility bore a
significant association. This was later corroborated by Engel et al., (2000) who found that the effect of demeanour was contingent on its severity.

The demeanour literature is plagued by the operationalisation and measurement of the term. Some have considered demeanour to be anything that may be interpreted negatively by a police officer, others have defined it as a failure to display deference yet others have distinguished between verbal acts of disrespect and physical acts of resistance. These various behaviours are often assumed to be manifestations of the same concept and so it is difficult to know precisely what is being captured in the resulting measures. With these limitations in mind, the above reviewed U.S. literature suggests that suspect demeanour and non-compliant or resistant behaviour contribute to the eventual decision to arrest. Even when a number of other factors and interaction effects are taken into account, demeanour continues to exert an effect on police officer decision-making. Notably this is a generalisation that can only be applied to the U.S. - the relevance of suspect demeanour to the Australian policing context remains untested.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author/s</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Study Quality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brown, R. A., &amp; Frank, J.</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: ‘Cincinnati Police Department Community Policing Study’ dataset utilising systematic social observation to compare activities of community policing officers and officers assigned to traditional police duties during 1997 and 1998.</td>
<td>617 police-suspect encounters.</td>
<td>Disrespectful demeanour did not significantly increase the likelihood of arrest for either non-traffic (odds ratio = 4.20, ( p &gt; .05 )) or traffic-related offences (odds ratios = 0.34, ( p &gt; .05 )).</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crawford, C.</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: incident data of official responses to excessive noise ordinance violations in Midwest City during 1998 and 1999.</td>
<td>586 official reports that resulted in action.</td>
<td>Suspect noncompliance increased the likelihood of arrest (( \beta = .29, \ p &lt; .10 ))</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engel, R. S.</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: ‘Project on Policing Neighborhoods’ database comprising of 7,443 observed police-suspect encounters in Indianapolis and St. Petersburg, FL conducted during 1996 and 1997.</td>
<td>239 police officers; 81 supervisors; 1,487 non-traffic-related suspects; 581 traffic suspects.</td>
<td>Displays of disrespect toward police associated with increased risk of arrest (( \beta = .56, \ p &lt; .01 )) and use of force (( \beta = 1.40, \ p &lt; .001 )) for non-traffic suspects and for traffic suspects (( \beta = .80, \ p &lt; .01 )), (( \beta = 1.06, \ p &lt; .001 )) respectively.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Sample Size</td>
<td>Findings</td>
<td>Score</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engel, R. S., &amp; Silver, E.</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: ‘Project on Policing Neighborhoods’ (POPN) dataset comprising of 1,849 observed police-suspect encounters in Indianapolis and St. Petersburg during 1996-1997; Police Services Study (PSS) database comprising of 24 police agencies, 900 observed shifts and 5,688 observed police-suspect encounters in St. Louise, MO; Rochester, NY; Tampa and St. Petersburg, FL during 1977.</td>
<td>POPN 1,289 misdemeanour offences; PSS 1,578 misdemeanour offences.</td>
<td>Suspects that were disrespectful towards an officer were more likely to be arrested than their deferential counterparts in the POPN ($\beta = .53$, $p &lt; .01$) database, these findings were not replicated for the PSS database ($\beta = -.16$, $p &gt; .05$). Noncompliant suspects were more likely to be arrested across both datasets (POPN; $\beta = .94$, $p &lt; .05$, PSS; $\beta = 1.45$, $p &lt; .001$).</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engel, R. S., Sobol, J. J., &amp; Worden, R. E.</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: ‘Police Services Study’ database comprising of 24 police agencies, 900 observed shifts and 5,688 observed police-suspect encounters in St. Louise, MO; Rochester, NY; Tampa and St. Petersburg, FL during 1977.</td>
<td>1,461 non traffic-related encounters; 1,082 traffic-related encounters.</td>
<td>After controlling for interaction-phase crime, seriousness of encounter, and several demeanour interaction effects, disrespectful suspects were 2.2 times more likely to be arrested.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Klinger, D. A.</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: Metro-Dade police department dataset comprising of 245 observed disputes in Dade County, FL during 1985 and 1986.</td>
<td>245 disputes.</td>
<td>Demeanour did not exert a direct effect on arrest when interaction-phase crime was controlled for, ($\beta = .01$, $p = .98$).</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Klinger, D. A.</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: Metro-Dade police department dataset comprising of 245 disputes in Dade County, FL during 1985 and 1986.</td>
<td>245 disputes.</td>
<td>Three demeanour measures exerted no significant effect on the likelihood of arrest once measured crime was controlled for; a fourth measure (extreme hostility) significantly predicted the probability of arrest ($\beta = 1.23$, $p &lt; .05$).</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Dataset</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lundman, R. L.</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: ‘Midwest City Police-Citizen Encounters’ dataset comprising of 365 observed eight-hour shifts conducted in 1970 and 1971.</td>
<td>195 public drunkenness encounters; 200 juvenile encounters; 290 traffic law violation encounters.</td>
<td>Impolite and hostile demeanour did not significantly predict the likelihood of arrest when crime was partially controlled for ($\beta = .47, p &gt; .05; \beta = .34, p &gt; .05$ respectively). Mixed and greater than average impolite demeanour was a significant predictor of arrest ($\beta = 1.02, p &lt; .05; \beta = .77, p &lt; .05$).</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lundman, R. L.</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Systematic Observation: for 15 months starting in June 1970, seven observers accompanied police officers in Midwest City for a total of 365 eight-hour shifts involving 2,000 police-suspect encounters.</td>
<td>100 police-suspect encounters.</td>
<td>Impolite demeanour had the largest relative effect on arrest, increasing the probability of arrest by 28%.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novak, K. J., &amp; Engel, R. S.</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: ‘Cincinnati Police Department Community Policing Study’ dataset comprising of 2,671 observed police-suspect encounters in Cincinnati during 1997 and 1998.</td>
<td>617 police-suspect encounters.</td>
<td>Disrespectful suspects were 0.82 times more likely to be arrested than their deferential counterparts.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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14 These examinations utilised a one-tailed test of significance, allowing for a rejection of the null hypothesis with a less extreme result than that required by a two-tailed test. Authors did not justify the decisions to use a one-tailed test.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Study Description</th>
<th>Key Findings</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Novak, K. J., Frank, J., Smith, B. W., &amp; Engel, R. S.</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: ‘Cincinnati Police Department Community Policing Study’ dataset comprising of 2,671 observed police-suspect encounters in Cincinnati during 1997 and 1998.</td>
<td>Hostile (vs deferent) suspects were 3.03 times more likely to be arrested by beat officers and 1.46 times more likely to be arrested by community-oriented policing officers. Noncompliance increased the likelihood of arrest by a factor of 13.58 for beat officer encounters and by a factor of 9.24 for community-oriented policing officers.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith, D. A.</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: ‘Police Services Study’ database comprising of 24 police agencies, 900 observed shifts and 5,688 observed police-suspect encounters in St. Louise, MO; Rochester, NY; Tampa and St. Petersburg, FL during 1977.</td>
<td>Arrest was significantly more likely in encounters with antagonistic offenders ($t = 6.43$); antagonistic suspects were not significantly more likely to be arrested in militaristic agencies (high bureaucratisation and low professionalism).</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith, D. A.</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: ‘Police Services Study’ database comprising of 24 police agencies, 900 observed shifts and 5,688 observed police-suspect encounters in St. Louise, MO; Rochester, NY; Tampa and St. Petersburg, FL during 1977.</td>
<td>Suspect antagonism toward the police increased the probability of arrest by .40.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith, D. A. &amp; Klein. J. R.</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: ‘Police Services Study’ database comprising of 24 police agencies, 900 observed shifts and 5,688 observed police-suspect encounters in St. Louise, MO; Rochester, NY; Tampa and St. Petersburg, FL during 1977.</td>
<td>Antagonistic behaviour increased the probability of arrest across all departmental contexts. Most profoundly in fraternal police agencies ($\beta = .23, p &lt; .05$), followed by legalistic ($\beta = .17, p &lt; .05$), militaristic ($\beta = .15, p &lt; .05$) and service ($\beta = .10, p &lt; .05$) style agencies.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authors</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Dataset Description</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Findings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Smith, D. A., &amp; Klein, J. R.</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: ‘Police Services Study’ database comprising of 24 police agencies, 900 observed shifts and 5,688 observed police-suspect encounters in St. Louise, MO; Rochester, NY; Tampa and St. Petersburg, FL during 1977.</td>
<td>333 interpersonal disputes.</td>
<td>Demeanour significantly increased the probability of arrest ($t = 3.16$); 29% of antagonistic suspects were arrested compared to 11.7% of their deferential counterparts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swatt, M. L.</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: Teplin’s (1984; 1985) dataset comprising of 1,382 observed police-suspect encounters in Chicago, IL during 1980 and 1981.</td>
<td>1,989 citizens.</td>
<td>Best predictor of arrest was disrespectful/threatening demeanour ($\beta = 2.79$, Wald $\chi^2 (23) = 69.01, p &lt; .05$), followed by acquiescent/detached demeanour ($\beta = 2.16$, Wald $\chi^2 (23) = 50.77, p &lt; .05$), and pleading/frightened demeanour ($\beta = 1.74$, Wald $\chi^2 (23) = 22.73, p &lt; .05$).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Study Description</td>
<td>Sample Size</td>
<td>Findings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Terrill, W., &amp; Mastrofski, S. D.</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>'Project on Policing Neighborhoods' database comprising of 3,116 observed police-suspect encounters in Indianapolis and St. Petersburg during 1996 and 1997.</td>
<td>3,166 police-suspect encounters.</td>
<td>Suspects who displayed disrespectful behaviour toward officers were no more likely to have force used on them than were those who were respectful ($\beta = .06$, $p &lt; .05$).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visher, C. A.</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>'Police Services Study' database comprising of 24 police agencies, 900 observed shifts and 5,688 observed police-suspect encounters in St. Louise, MO; Rochester, NY; Tampa and St. Petersburg, FL during 1977.</td>
<td>785 police-suspect encounters.</td>
<td>Hostile or antagonistic behaviour had significant but equal effects on arrest decisions for male and female suspects ($t = -1.29$).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worden, R. E., &amp; Pollitz, A. A.</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>'Police Services Study' database comprising of 24 police agencies, 900 observed shifts and 5,688 observed police-suspect encounters in St. Louise, MO; Rochester, NY; Tampa and St. Petersburg, FL during 1977.</td>
<td>167 domestic disturbance encounters.</td>
<td>Disrespectful demeanour increased the probability of arrest by .43.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worden, R. E., &amp; Shepard, R. L.</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>'Police Services Study' database comprising of 24 police agencies, 900 observed shifts and 5,688 observed police-suspect encounters in St. Louise, MO; Rochester, NY; Tampa and St. Petersburg, FL during 1977.</td>
<td>2,932 suspects. *</td>
<td>Disrespectful demeanour increased the probability of arrest from .06 to .61. Passive noncompliance and active verbal resistance raise the probability of arrest from .09 to .27 and .22, respectively.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.5.3 Is chivalry dead?

Fiction has almost exclusively assigned the victim role to the female gender; depicting the male as a violent aggressor and the female as a passive sufferer. Scholars have argued that this societal attitude has penetrated the legal system, such that female offenders are afforded greater leniency than their male counterparts. Pollak (1950) termed this phenomenon the ‘chivalry hypothesis’ some 65 years ago, proposing that women who behave in ways that are congruent with traditional female roles of purity and submission receive preferential or lenient treatment (Horowitz & Pottieger, 1991). U.S. research on the effects of gender bias on police officer decision-making is limited (see Table 6). However, there is some evidence to suggest that officers are more likely to extend comfort or reassurance to female citizens, display less suspicion towards women (Smith, Makarios, & Alpert, 2006), issue more traffic-related tickets to male drivers (Makowsky & Stratmann, 2009), use greater levels of force against male suspects (Terrill & Mastrofski, 2002), and arrest male suspects significantly more than female suspects (Brown & Frank, 2005; Mastrofski et al., 1995; Novak & Engel, 2005; Novak et al., 2002; Smith & Klein, 1984), with some noted exceptions (Blalock, DeVaro, Leventhal, & Simon, 2011; Engel & Silver, 2001; Lundman 1998; Smith, 1984; Swatt, 2002).

The most comprehensive analysis of the effect of gender on arrest probability was conducted by Smith and Visher (1981). The authors found that, all else being held constant, gender had no significant effect on the probability of arrest. A complex pattern of interaction between gender and police officer decision-making has since been identified (Visher, 1983), suggesting that chivalrous treatment at the stage of arrest may depend largely on a set of gender expectations that exist between men and women (Krohn, Curry, & Nelson-Kilger, 1983). Essentially, when women behave in a manner incongruent with traditional sex-roles the tendency for police officers to offer greater leniency is extinguished. That is, “chivalry
exists … for those women who display appropriate gender behaviours and characteristics” (Visher, 1983 p. 5).
Table 6. Review of studies investigating the effect of gender on police officer decision-making.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author/s</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Study Quality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blalock, G., DeVaro, J., Leventhal, S., &amp; Simon, D. H</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: Bloomington, IL; Boston, MA; Highland Park, IL; Tennessee; and Wichita, KS police datasets comprising of 11,688; 176,033; 4,620; 15,404; and 36,374 observed police-suspect encounters, respectively. Data collection occurred between 2001 and 2005.</td>
<td>244,119 police-suspect encounters.</td>
<td>No evidence to suggest that men are more likely than woman to be ticketed when stopped.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brown, R. A., &amp; Frank, J.</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: ‘Cincinnati Police Department Community Policing Study’ dataset utilising systematic social observation to compare activities of community policing officers and officers assigned to traditional police duties during 1997 and 1998.</td>
<td>617 police-suspect encounters.</td>
<td>Female suspects were significantly less likely to be arrested than their male counterparts for both non-traffic ($\beta = -1.66$, $p &lt; .05$) and traffic-related ($\beta = -3.47$, $p &lt; .01$) offences.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engel, R. S., &amp; Silver, E.</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: ‘Project on Policing Neighborhoods’ (POPN) dataset comprising of 1,849 observed police-suspect encounters in Indianapolis and St. Petersburg during 1996-1997; Police Services Study (PSS) database comprising of 24 police agencies, 900 observed shifts and 5,688 observed police-suspect encounters in St. Louise, MO;</td>
<td>POPN 1,289 misdemeanour offences; PSS 1,578 misdemeanour offences.</td>
<td>Male suspects were significantly more likely to be arrested in the POPN ($\beta = .42$, $p &lt; .05$) database, this finding was not replicated for the PSS database ($\beta = .33$, $p &gt; .05$).</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authors</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Type of Research</td>
<td>Sample Size</td>
<td>Key Findings</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Krohn, M. D., Curry, J. P., &amp; Nelson-Kilger, S.</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: three birth cohorts (1942, 1949, 1955) from school census records totalling 6,127 persons. Police contact records for each cohort member were determined using police files. A total of 19,489 contacts were recorded.</td>
<td>10,723 contacts.</td>
<td>The non-additive effect of sex and minority status indicated that the sex difference for Black suspects was .13 and .04 for White suspects. No significant minority status difference in the probability of referral for contacts with males (White suspects = .24; Black suspects = .26).</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lundmann, R. J.</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Systematic Observation: for 15 months starting in June 1970, seven observers accompanied police officers in Midwest City for a total of 365 eight-hour shifts involving 2,000 police-suspect encounters.</td>
<td>100 police-suspect encounters.</td>
<td>Sex did not significantly increase the likelihood of arrest, males 2% more likely to be arrested than their female counterparts.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Makowsky, M. D., &amp; Stratmann, T.</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: Boston Glove dataset comprising of 68,357 citations issued in the state from April 2001 through May 2001.</td>
<td>68,357 citations.</td>
<td>Females were less likely to receive a fine than males ($\beta = -.33, p &lt; .01$); fines received by females were 9% lower in sum.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Novak, K. J., &amp; Engel, R. S.</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: ‘Cincinnati Police Department Community Policing Study’ database comprising of 2,671 observed police-suspect encounters</td>
<td>617 encounters.</td>
<td>Male suspects were 0.87 times more likely to be arrested than their female counterparts.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Data Description</th>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Methodological Quality</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Novak, K. J., Frank, J., Smith, B. W., &amp; Engel, R. S.</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: ‘Cincinnati Police Department Community Policing Study’ dataset comprising of 2,671 observed police-suspect encounters in Cincinnati during 1997 and 1998.</td>
<td>Females significantly less likely to be arrested than their male counterparts ($\beta = -1.34, p &lt; .01$); being male increased the likelihood of arrest by a factor of .29 for beat officer encounters but only by a factor of .09 for community-oriented policing officers.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith, D. A.</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: ‘Police Services Study’ database comprising of 24 police agencies, 900 observed shifts and 5,688 observed police-suspect encounters in St. Louis, MO; Rochester, NY; Tampa and St. Petersburg, FL during 1977.</td>
<td>Suspect sex did not significantly affect the probability of arrest ($t = .64, p &gt; .05$).</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith, D. A., &amp; Klein, J. R.</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: ‘Police Services Study’ database comprising of 24 police agencies, 900 observed shifts and 5,688 observed police-suspect encounters in St. Louis, MO; Rochester, NY; Tampa and St. Petersburg, FL during 1977.</td>
<td>Police were significantly less likely to arrest in disputes involving female complainants (11.4%) compared to male complainants (21.4%). Male suspects were significantly more likely to be arrested (17.7%) than their female counterparts (6.8%).</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith, D. A., &amp; Visher, C. A</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: ‘Police Services Study’ database comprising of 24 police agencies, 900 observed shifts and 5,688 observed police-suspect encounters in St. Louis, MO; Rochester, NY; Tampa and St. Petersburg, FL during 1977.</td>
<td>Sex did not significantly increase the likelihood of arrest ($z = .77$).</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Smith, M. R., Makarios, M., & Alpert, G. P. 2006  US  Secondary Data Analysis: Miami-Dade County police department dataset comprising of 66,109 traffic stops made during April through to October of 2001. 62,926 traffic stops.  Females were significantly less likely to have a record check either of themselves ($\beta = -0.59, p < .01$) or their vehicle ($\beta = -0.35, p < .01$). When controlling for suspicion, female suspects continued to be significantly less likely to be arrested than their male counterparts ($\beta = -0.73, p < .01$).

Swatt, M. L. 2002  US  Secondary Data Analysis: Teplin’s (1984; 1985) dataset comprising of 1,382 observed police-suspect encounters in Chicago, IL during 1980 and 1981. 1,989 citizens.  Suspect sex did not significantly affect the probability of arrest ($\beta = -0.03$, Wald $\chi^2 (23) = 0.02, p > .05$).

Terrill, W., & Mastrofski, S. D. 2002  US  Secondary Data Analysis: ‘Project on Policing Neighborhoods’ database comprising of 3,116 observed police-suspect encounters in Indianapolis and St. Petersburg during 1996 and 1997. 3,166 police-suspect encounters.  Physical restraint was used with 19% of males and 13% of females. Verbal force was also more likely to be used on males (44%) than on women (40%).

Visher, C. A. 1983  US  Secondary Data Analysis: ‘Police Services Study’ database comprising of 24 police agencies, 900 observed shifts and 5,688 observed police-suspect encounters in St. Louise, MO; Rochester, NY; Tampa and St. Petersburg, FL during 1977. 785 police-suspect encounters. 20% of male suspects were arrested compared to 16% of female suspects – a statistically insignificant difference; older female suspects were less likely to be arrested than their younger counterparts ($t = -1.68, p < .05$); Black female suspects were more likely to be arrested than their White counterparts ($t = 2.09, p < .05$); antagonistic female suspects have no advantage over similar male suspects ($t = -1.29, p > .05$).
2.5.4 The influence of suspect mental illness.

Police officers frequently encounter persons with mental illness (Teplin, Abram, & McClelland, 1996). This contact has increased considerably since the 1960s given the deinstitutionalisation of state mental hospitals (Teplin, 1983), more stringent standards for civil commitment (Borzecki & Wormith, 1985; Laberge & Morin, 1995), limited access to community treatment programs, and the compartmentalisation of public mental health systems (Lurigio & Swartz, 2000). Consequently, policing has had to take on greater responsibility in initiating interventions and providing assistance to people experiencing mental illness. Increased contact, coupled with clear evidence to indicate that people experiencing mental illness are overrepresented amongst incarcerated populations (Ogloff, 2002) has created grave concern as to the possible misapplication of the authority to arrest (Engel & Silver, 2001).

The term criminalisation has been adopted to describe the disproportionate number of people experiencing mental illness entering the criminal justice system (Lamb & Weinberger, 1998), raising concern that police officers are resorting more readily to criminal justice sanctions rather than mental health options (Patch & Arrigo, 1999). Researchers differ in their conceptualisation of the use of arrest. Some suggest it to be a means of handling the potentially troublesome behaviour displayed by people experiencing mental illness (Teplin, 1984), whilst others perceive it as a gesture of compassion (Lamb, Weinberger, & DeCuir, 2002) or a reflection of the common belief that people experiencing mental illness are more violent than the general population (Cuellar, Snowden, & Ewing, 2007). Regardless, the most influential support for the tenants of the criminalisation hypothesis stemmed from Teplin’s (1984) and Teplin and Preutt’s (1992) analysis of police interactions with 506 Chicago suspects. Using the same data, the analyses indicated that the probability of being arrested was 20% greater for suspects exhibiting signs of mental illness than for those who did not
appear mentally ill. This finding has been replicated more recently by Fisher et al. (2011).

However, debates regarding the accuracy of the criminalisation hypothesis gradually surfaced (see Table 7). For example, Engel and Silver (2001) found that suspects experiencing mental illness were significantly less likely to be arrested compared to suspects deemed as not having a mental illness. The authors concluded that adequately taking into account various demographic and suspect variables when considering the association between arrest and mental illness eliminated the criminalisation hypothesis. This finding was replicated by Novak and Engel (2005), who reported that mentally ill suspects were 1.17 times less likely to be arrested compared to non-mentally ill suspects. In conjunction with other research (Bonovitz & Bonovitz, 1981; Green, 1997; Hiday, 1992; Swatt, 2002), these findings diverted attention to the repudiation of the criminalisation hypothesis.

Interest in the role of mental illness and police intervention has recently surged in the Australian context. However, the focus has predominantly been on police attitudes (Clifford, 2012) and hypothetical vignettes (Godfredson, Ogloff, Thomas, Luebbers, 2010) rather than actual policing practices. One notable exception is Kesic’s (2011) examination of suspect mental illness in incidents of fatal and nonfatal police use of force. Kesic’s findings indicated that persons experiencing a major mental disorder were overrepresented in both fatal and nonfatal incidents of police use of force. It was concluded that significant training reform was needed to facilitate police officer decision-making when dealing with people experiencing mental illness.

Evidently, conflicting findings exist as to the independent influence of a suspect’s mental illness on the decision to arrest. Some researchers have yielded support for the criminalisation hypothesis, yet others have found that police officers are reluctant to use arrest in encounters involving people experiencing mental illness. Although uncertainty continues to permeate the published literature, it appears that the reinterpretation of previous
findings within the context of more recent evidence indicates that mental illness in of itself may not substantially increase the likelihood of arrest in police-suspect encounters. Although arrest has not been investigated in the Australian context, there is some evidence to suggest that police officers utilise more forceful tactics when dealing with suspects experiencing mental illness (Kesic, 2011).
### Table 7. Review of studies investigating the effect of suspect mental illness on police officer decision-making.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author/s</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Study Quality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bonovitz, J. C., &amp; Bonovitz, J. S.</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis; utilised longitudinal data collected from police department archives for the years 1975 through to 1979.</td>
<td>214 police-suspect encounters.</td>
<td>12 non-dangerous, treatment-resistant individuals were arrested; 9 were jailed.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engel, R. S., &amp; Silver, E.</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: ‘Project on Policing Neighbourhoods’ (POPN) dataset comprising of 1,849 observed police-suspect encounters in Indianapolis and St. Petersburg during 1996-1997; ‘Police Services Study’ (PSS) comprising of 5,688 observed police-suspect encounters in St Louise, MO; Rochester, NY; Tampa and St. Petersburg, FL during 1977.</td>
<td>POPN 1,289 misdemeanor offences; PSS 1,578 misdemeanor offences.</td>
<td>Officers in the POPN study were significantly less likely to arrest mentally disorders suspects (7.6%) compared with non-mentally disordered suspects (18.2%). A larger percentage of mentally disordered suspects were arrested (16.2%) compared with non-mentally disordered suspects (13.0%) in the PSS dataset.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fisher, W. H., Simon, L., Roy-Bujnowski, K., Grudzinskas, A., Wolff, N., Crockett, E., &amp; Banks, S.</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: Massachusetts Department of mental health dataset comprising of 10,742 persons receiving inpatient, residential or case management services during 1991 and 1992.</td>
<td>10,742 persons.</td>
<td>32.8% of the cohort was arrested at least once during the observation period, compared with 23.2% of the general Massachusetts population. The cohort were 1.84 times more likely to be arrested for drug-related offences, 5.95 times more likely to be arrested for assault and battery on a police officer, and 4.22 times more likely to be arrested for misdemeanour crimes against persons.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Green, T.M. 1997 US Mixed methods: quantitative component comprised 148 incident coding forms completed by police officers after an encounter with a person suffering from mental illness. Qualitative component comprised structured and semi-structured interviews with 11 police officers. 148 incident forms; 11 police officer interviews Suspects presenting with mental illness were 4.17 times more likely to be arrested if they committed a misdemeanor offence and 1.85 times more likely to be arrested if they had a known criminal history. Informal sanctions were 1.99 times more likely if the suspect committed a violation offence and 1.42 times more likely if the suspect committed no offence. Qualitative analysis indicated that officers believed that official sanctions can be punishing for both the officer and the suspect.

Hiday, V. A. 1992 US Secondary Data Analysis: civil commitment hearings for 1,226 allegedly mentally ill adults during 1984 and 1985 in North Carolina. Court records were used to gather demographic, diagnostic, and dangerousness information. A follow-up occurred six months following the commitment hearing. 1,226 mentally ill adults. Arrest of candidates in the 6-month follow-up was infrequent (7.1%); over half of the arrests (50.9%) were accounted for by a small number (1.55%) of candidates who had multiple arrests. Candidates were more likely to be arrested for burglary and larceny than the general population (21.4% to 11.4%, p < .05).

Kesic, D. 2011 AUS Data linkage: data were extracted from (i) the Use of Force register, (ii) the Law Enforcement Assistance Program, (iii) the Client Interface Management/Operational Data Store. 48 cases of fatalities, 4,267 cases of nonfatal use of force. 48 deaths of persons with a mental illness resulting from police use of force between November 1982 and February 2007. 91% of suspects were behaving in an aggressive manner, 91% had weapons, 82% refused to drop the weapon, 80% threatened officers with a weapon and 89% resisted arrest. In the nonfatal use of force sample, 50% of suspects had been clients of the mental health system; 38% had a diagnosed mental disorder.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Study Type</th>
<th>Setting and Details</th>
<th>Main Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Novak, K. J., &amp; Engel, R. S.</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis:</td>
<td>‘Cincinnati Police Department Community Policing Study’ database comprising of 2,671 observed police-suspect encounters in Cincinnati during 1997 and 1998.</td>
<td>617 police-suspect encounters. Suspects presumed to have a mental illness were 1.17 times less likely to be arrested compared to non-mentally disordered suspects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teplin, L. A.</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Systematic Observation:</td>
<td>police officers were observed in everyday interactions with citizens for 2,200 hours and 1,382 encounters in Chicago, IL during 1980 and 1981.</td>
<td>884 police-suspect encounters. Probability of arrest nearly 20% greater for suspects exhibiting signs of mental disorder; 46.7% of mentally ill suspects were arrested compared to 27.9% of suspects who showed no signs of mental disorder.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teplin, L. A., &amp; Pruett, N. S.</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Systematic observation: police officers were observed in everyday interactions with citizens for 2,200 hours and 1,396 encounters in Chicago, IL during 1980 and 1981.</td>
<td>1,072 police-suspect encounters. Mentally ill suspects had an arrest rate (46.7%) nearly double that of non-ill suspects (27.9%). Hospitalisation was initiated for only 13.3% of the mentally ill suspects.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
2.6 Officer Characteristics

Research on the exercise of police discretion has mostly adopted one of two dispositions (Sherman, 1980). One approach is to examine the actions of police officers during police-suspect encounters by accounting for any variation in behaviour in terms of situational factors. Situational explanations posit that police officer behaviour is primarily influenced by structural characteristics of the immediate situation: the nature of the problem, the attributes and actions of the suspect, and a host of contextual variables (Berk & Loseke, 1980). The second approach attempts to examine differences in behavioural patterns by identifying individual variations. This approach is underpinned by psychological theories which assume that individual characteristics, experiences, views, and outlooks have an effect on consequent behaviour (Muir, 1977; Worden, 1995). It is beyond the scope of the current review to examine the attitudinal explanation of police behaviour, this has been extensively covered elsewhere (see Brown, 1988; Muir, 1977). In the following sections, focus is placed upon the effect of training and experience.

It is commonly assumed that those who have greater knowledge and more developed skills perform better than those who have not yet acquired such attributes (e.g., Juliussen, Karlsson, & Garling, 2005; Perkins & Rao, 1990). Police officers have frequently expressed the belief that knowledge derived from the classroom setting is of limited value and that learning occurs predominantly through doing (Bayley & Bittner, 1984), a premise which police reformers have utilised as the precept to professionalising policing. Does this mean that policing is not amenable to rational analysis and formal learning? Is the view of policing as a craft the absolute antithesis of the view of policing as a science? The following sections review the empirical rigor of this assumption and its implication for the current research.
2.6.1 Train to decide.

Many scholars have proposed that effective police training must address two fundamental tasks: (i) police officers undertaking the training must acquire the basic conceptual apparatus which will guide them in understanding the environmental demands placed upon them, and (ii) training must provide guidance regarding how to exercise judgment and discretion in real-life situations (Birzer, 2003; Haberfeld, 2002; Marenin, 2004). Although training has developed considerably since the 1960s (Mastrofski, 1990), knowledge regarding its efficacy is mostly limited to whether higher quantities of training produce desired changes in police practice. Research in the area is generally scarce, with the available findings creating uncertainty as to the effect of training on police officer attitudes, beliefs, skills, and practices. This has produced ample debate regarding whether police officers base their decisions predominantly on training or their own discretion, an impasse epitomised by Vinzant and Crothers’ (1998) statement:

Police officers draw on common sense, judgment and other personal resources when analyzing and acting on a situation, rather than on rules, training or supervision … The officer does not rely on a predetermined plan of action because no such plan could possibly cover the variety and complexity of situations that might arise. (p. 48)

One of the earliest examinations of the effects of training was conducted by Rosenbaum (1987) who found that training may affect police officer views in the short-term but that there were few long-term effects once the officers returned to their daily duties. Recent research has noted similar positive, immediate effects of training on a number of factors including communication skills (Wheller, Quinton, Fildes, & Mills, 2013), knowledge of mental illness (Pinfold et al., 2003), behavioural performance (Lonsway, Welch, &
Fitzgerald, 2001), attitudes toward syringe access initiatives (Beletsky et al., 2011) and trauma resilience (Arnetz, Nevedal, Lumley, Backman, & Lublin, 2008). However, the generalisability of this research remains limited due to the absence of any follow-up data to indicate the sustainability (or otherwise) of the identified effects (see Table 8).

The contingent nature of training’s effects appears to depend not only on the logistics and content of the curricula, but also on the organisational environment from which the police officer operates. Police officers working within stations that foster and encourage training principles - manifested through ongoing, supportive supervisory practices - are able to sustain and adhere to training doctrines (Mastrofski & Ritti, 1996). In other words, retaining attitudes and beliefs acquired through the received training hinges on whether the organisation and its leaders accommodate for an environment conducive to training practices. Academy training that is not reinforced in the field has been shown to produce no lasting effects on police officer attitudes (Dejong, Mastrofski, & Parks, 2001; Haarr, 2001; Wortley & Homel, 1995).

Given the nature of resources injected into police training annually, further examination of the effects of training on police officer decision-making is quintessential. What role does training have in day-to-day judgments made by police officers? What role do supervisors have in creating a police culture conducive to training principles?
Table 8. Review of studies investigating the effect of training on police officer decision-making.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author/s</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arnetz, B. B., Nevedal, D. C., Lumley, M. A., Backman, L., &amp; Lublin, A.</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Randomised Controlled Trial: 18 male police officers with 1 year experience in the Swedish police force participated in a live, life-like critical incident simulation. Biological, psychophysiological, behavioural, mood and stress levels were measured during and after the simulation. Nine police recruits received imagery training over a ten week period; the other 9 served as the control group.</td>
<td>18 police officers.</td>
<td>Imagery-trained police officers (vs control group) reported significantly less negative mood following the simulation, $t(16) = -2.35, p = .03$; performed significantly better, $t(16) = 2.67$, $p = .02$; and had lower heart rate during the simulation $t(16) = 26.82$, $p = .00$.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beletsky, L., Agrawal, A., Moreau, B., Kumar, P., Weiss-Laxer, N., &amp; Heimer, R.</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>One Group Pre-test Post-test Design: an educational intervention was delivered by departmental training specialists in Rhode Island targeting syringe policy and community-level disease prevention; pre- and post-questionnaires were used to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention.</td>
<td>94 police officers responded to baseline survey; 78 responded to the post-training survey.</td>
<td>At baseline, officers indicated that syringe access initiatives promote drug use (51%), increase the likelihood of police needle stick injuries (58%), and fail to reduce disease spread (38%). No significant change in attitude and knowledge regarding syringe access was observed post-training.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Study Design/Methodology</td>
<td>Findings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Haarr, R. N.</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Longitudinal: 446 police recruits were followed through the Phoenix Regional Police Training Academy and to respective police agencies. A pre-test survey measuring baseline attitudes was administered on the first day of Academy training (T1); a post-test occurred 16 weeks later (T2); a second post-test occurred 12 weeks following T2 (T3); a final post-test occurred at the completion of the 1 year probation period (T4).</td>
<td>Positive gains made during Academy training regarding community-policing ($\beta = -.55, p &lt; .01$) and problem-solving policing ($\beta = -.75, p &lt; .01$) deteriorated over the course of follow-up. Orientation toward community-oriented policing ($\beta = -.62, p &lt; .01$) and problem-solving policing ($\beta = -.59, p &lt; .01$) also reduced.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lonsway, K. A., Welch, S., &amp; Fitzgerald, L. F.</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Randomised Controlled Trial: comprised of a control group (30-minute discussion on sexual assault) and an experimental training program (3.5 hour discussion on sexual assault); 161 police recruits completed numerous attitude and cognition measures following the discussion.</td>
<td>No significant differences in content knowledge $F(1, 121) = 26.12, p &lt; .49$ and rape myth acceptance $F(1, 127) = .03, p &lt; .86$ were identified between the experimental and control groups. Recruits in the experimental group were more likely to address the needs and concerns of the victim, $X^2 (1, 325) = 13.81, p &lt; .01$ and were more likely to provide empathy $X^2 (1, N = 259) = 7.87, p &lt; .01$).</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Pinfold, V., Huxley, P., Thornicroft, G., Farmer, P., Toulmin, H., &amp; Graham T</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>One Group Pre-test Post-test Design: an educational intervention was delivered by service users in South East England targeting mental health awareness; pre- and post-questionnaires were used to 163 police officers received training; pre- and post-data were available for 109 officers.</td>
<td>At the conclusion of the workshop, 37% of officers remembered information relating to violence, recovery and prevalence. At follow-up, 6 officers recalled the information. No impact on the belief that people with mental illness are</td>
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<tr>
<td>Researcher(s)</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Findings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rosenbaum, D. P.</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Randomised Controlled Trial: Participants were randomly assigned to either the experimental group (received a three-day victim-focused training program) or the control group (received a three-day record-keeping practices training). Officers completed a two-part survey immediately after the training (T1) and at four months follow-up (T2).</td>
<td>Officers in the experimental group produced an average of 37.45 units of victim-orientated information per scenario, while the control group averaged only 7.37 such units ($p &lt; .01$); experimental group supplied an average of 56.42 units of procedure-oriented information versus 95.26 units for the control group ($p &lt; .01$).</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Wheller, L., Quinton, P., Fildes, A., &amp; Mills, A. P. C.</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Randomised Controlled Trial: Participants were randomly selected from a database of all serving constables within Greater Manchester Police and randomly assigned to the treatment group (to receive training) or the control group (to not receive training).</td>
<td>Officers in the treatment group had attitudes that were significantly more positive than those in the control group regarding the delivery of quality service, building empathy and rapport, and fair decision-making.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wortley, R., &amp; Homel, R.</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>AUS</td>
<td>Longitudinal: 412 police recruits completed three surveys whilst attending routine aptitude and fitness examinations (T1); during Academy training (T2); and at the completion of the 1 year probation period (T3).</td>
<td>Ethnocentrism increased significantly during the first year of service; Academy training did not reduce recruit prejudice $F(6,792) = 1.33, p &gt; .05$.</td>
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</table>
2.6.2 Experience in making hard decisions.

The dichotomy between “book smart” and “street smart” transcends almost all disciplines and occupations, the policing sector being no different. Proponents of experience argue that repetitive exposure to the various situational contingencies of policing is crucial to establishing good policing practice (Bayley & Bittner, 1984). The fundamental contention holds that the reality police officers confront in the field is too complex to be reduced to simple principles that can be taught in a classroom setting - “officers commonly portray policing as being essentially a craft in which learning comes exclusively through experience intuitively processed by individual officers” (Bayley & Bittner, 1984, p. 35). Despite the extensive attention given to studying police work, little is known about the skills acquired through experience and how, or whether, these change the way in which police officers approach various encounters (see Table 9). There is limited existent evidence to suggest that the length of an officer’s tenure has an effect on perceptions of victim cooperativeness (Robinson & Chandek, 2000), referrals to mental health treatment (Finn & Stalans, 1995), prejudice (Wortley & Homel, 1995), aggressiveness (Alpert & Dunham, 2004; Mastrofski, Snipes, & Supina, 1996; Terrill & Mastrofski, 2002), decision-making frames (Dunham, Alpert, Stroshine, & Bennett, 2005; Finn & Stalans, 2002; Withrow, 2004), implementation of problem-solving strategies (Dejong et al., 2001), and conceptualisation of intimate partner violence (Stalans & Finn, 1995).

An Australian-based study conducted by Wortley and Homel (1995) investigated prejudice among police recruits and its trajectory over the period of their Academy training. The findings indicated that levels of ethnocentrism (i.e., the belief in the inherent superiority of one’s own ethnic group) remained unchanged between recruitment and Academy graduation. The authors also found that field experience could increase police officer prejudice, particularly if recruits were based in districts characterised by a large Aboriginal
population. It was thus concluded that experience may override the positive effects of training or in some other way hinder the transfer of the gains made.

The concepts of experience, expertise, and tacit knowledge are ripe in the naturalistic decision-making literature - a theoretical approach focused on how individuals make decisions in dynamic, uncertain, and quickly developing situations (Cohen, 1993; Klein, 1999; Zsambok & Klein, 1997). The naturalistic decision-making framework has been utilised in the formulation of various aspects of decision-making in fire-fighting, military environments, nuclear power plants, and nursing (Klein, 2008). However, policing has received surprisingly little attention. Some policing scholars have attempted to apply the theory to risk management processes (Alpert & Rojek, 2011), decision-making in murder inquiries (Mullins, Alison, & Crego, 2008), and investigations of rape (O’Keefe, 2002). These attempts have been limited to theoretical speculation, with little empirical data. As it stands, the role of experience in police officer decision-making remains empirically unexplored and ambiguous whilst hypothetically and anecdotally robust.
Table 9. Review of studies investigating the effect of officer’s level of experience on decision-making.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author/s</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alpert, G. P., &amp;</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: Miami-Dade County police department dataset comprising of 1,622 observed police-suspect encounters during 1973.</td>
<td>499 police-suspect encounters.</td>
<td>Officers with &lt; 5 years’ experience used force in 44% of cases; officers with 5-10 years’ experience used force in 26% of cases; officers with &gt; 10 years’ experience used force in 30% of cases. Officers with more years of experience used a higher level of force than officers with fewer years of experience ($r = .16$, $p = .01$).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dunham, R. G.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dejong, C.,</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: ‘Police Services Study’ database comprising of 5,688 observed police-suspect encounters in St. Louise, MO; Rochester, NY; Tampa and St. Petersburg, FL during 1977.</td>
<td>614 police-suspect encounters.</td>
<td>Officers with less than 10 years of experience were significantly more likely to engage in problem-solving strategies ($\beta = .17$, $p = .01$).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mastrofski, S. D.,</td>
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<td>&amp; Parks, R. B.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dunham, R., G.,</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Systematic Observation: field observers accompanied officers on three shifts in Savannah, Georgia during 2002.</td>
<td>103 stops.</td>
<td>Length of tenure was significantly associated with suspect resistance, ($r = .28$, $p &lt; .01$), however did not affect the likelihood of arrest ($r = -.03$, $p &gt; .05$).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alpert, G. P.,</td>
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<td>Stroshine, M. S.,</td>
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<tr>
<td>&amp; Bennett, K.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finn, M. A., &amp;</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Survey: 257 police officers from North Georgia were randomly assigned to read one of 12 scripts (manipulated through victim injury, antagonism between disputants, and husband’s mental state).</td>
<td>257 completed surveys.</td>
<td>Experienced officers were more accurate in their decision to recommend outpatient mental health (82.25%) compared to their less experienced counterparts (64.71%). The accuracy of decisions to not</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stalans, L. J.</td>
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</table>
recommend was similar (73.53% and 72.97% respectively).

**Finn, M. A., & Stalans, L. J.** 2002 US Secondary Data Analysis: 257 police officers from North Georgia were randomly assigned to read one of 12 scripts (manipulated through victim injury, antagonism between disputants, and husband’s mental state).

Novice officers focused on normative considerations (e.g., blameworthiness), whereas experienced officers focused on pragmatic and efficiency considerations (e.g., risk of future violence).


Greater police experience was associated with a significantly lower likelihood that a compliance request directed at a citizen would take the form of a suggestion or entreaty ($\beta = -.05, p < .05$).

**Robinson, A. L., & Chandek, M. S.** 2000 US Survey: officers completed a Domestic Violence Case Summary form at the scene of every domestic violence call; officers completed a Supplemental Form devised by the authors addressing perceptions of victim cooperativeness and characteristics.

Length of tenure did not significantly predict the decision to arrest during domestic incidents ($\beta = .01, p > .05$).

**Stalans, L. J., & Finn, M. A.** 1995 US Survey: 128 police officers from North Georgia were randomly assigned to read one of 8 scripts (manipulated through income of disputants and wife’s actions).

Experienced officers were more accurate in their decision to recommend outpatient mental health (100%) compared to their less experienced counterparts (31.58%). Experienced officers were 7.25 times more likely to arrest if there was evidence to substantiate claims, novice officers were only 1.17 times more likely to arrest under the same circumstances. Novice officers more
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Study Design</th>
<th>Sample Size</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Terrill, W., &amp; Mastrofski, S. D.</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: ‘Project on Policing Neighbourhoods’ database comprising of 3,116 observed police-suspect encounters in Indianapolis and St. Petersburg during 1996 and 1997.</td>
<td>3,166 police-suspect encounters.</td>
<td>Encounters with inexperienced officers were significantly more likely to result in higher levels of force compared to those involving more experienced officers ($\beta = -0.01$, $p &lt; 0.01$).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withrow, B. L.</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Secondary Data Analysis: Wichita police department dataset comprising of 37,454 police-citizen encounters in Wichita during 2001; participating police officers collected data following every police/citizen contact of an official nature; US bureau of the Census, 2001 for overall population figures.</td>
<td>37,454 police-suspect encounters.</td>
<td>Officers with greater years of experience were .99 times less likely to arrest a suspect than their less experienced counterparts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wortley, R., &amp; Homel, R.</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>AUS</td>
<td>Longitudinal: 412 police recruits completed three surveys whilst attending routine aptitude and fitness examinations (T1); during Academy training (T2); and at the completion of the 1 year probation period (T3).</td>
<td>412 police recruits.</td>
<td>Recruits stationed at districts with an Aboriginal population above 1.1% became increasingly prejudiced.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.7 Discussion

As expected, the preceding review of the factors influencing police officer decision-making showed variation across and within studies with inadequate evidence to draw any firm conclusions. Some themes nevertheless emerged. There were a sufficient number of studies indicating that race, gender, and demeanour – and to some degree suspect mental illness - influenced police practice to raise concern as to the constituents of officer decision-making. The role of training and supervision appears to be muddied; despite the vast resources injected into police training the available evidence indicates limited prospects of attitudinal and behavioural change.

The current review has several strengths. The search strategy was extensive and comprehensive, resulting in a large number of published studies and books. A transparent methodological quality assessment was carried out, with numerous studies excluded due to poor methodological rigor and little application to real-world scenarios. However, randomised controlled trials were rare. This is not entirely unexpected given that correlates of decision-making do not easily lend themselves to this type of design. Consequently, a large proportion of the studies reviewed were founded on mixed methods. In an attempt to ensure research quality, only peer-reviewed empirical work was included and a quality appraisal of each study was undertaken.

Limitations also arose from the studies included in the review. Most notably, the majority of the studies utilised have been conducted in the U.S. and as such were unable to attain a ‘High’ quality rating as generalisability and applicability to the Australian criminal justice system could not be guaranteed. Many of the studies reviewed relied on secondary data analysis procedures, which allowed for access to large sample sizes and longitudinal data. However, control of study population and measures collected were often not exactly reflective of the research aims. The observational nature of the secondary data also meant that
assessing causality was almost an impossible feat.

In summary, researchers still have much to learn about the effects of legal and extra-legal situational influences on police decision-making. This appears to be particularly so within the Australian context. The search to uncover the causes and control of police practice must extend beyond the limited domains of the situation and the individual police officer. Situational explanations of police behaviour are predicated on implicit presumptions that police officer behaviour is the result of situational parameters. Individual explanations assume that inherent biases of the police officer account for the majority of errors made in the decision-making process. Yet neither conceptualisation can adequately explain the complexity and diversity of decision-making. Any theory of police officer decision-making must assume a holistic stance, encapsulating the effect of situational ambiguity and uncertainty of the work environment on individual police officers’ decision-making capacity. It is the intention of the current research to seek to develop such a substantive theory by considering how police officers make decisions in stressful, ambiguous and potentially violent incidents. Specifically, the research question was twofold - how does police officer decision-making unfold amidst dynamic and fast-paced circumstances, and what information or strategies do police officers use to arrive at a decision outcome? In line with this, a grounded theory study was undertaken to examine how officers make decisions in situations where specific actions are not prescribed by police policy and/or procedure.
Qualitative research is utilised in numerous disciplines, fields and subject matters. It is an interconnected family of terms, concepts and assumptions - its complexity clearly evidenced by the vast and separate literatures addressing its assorted approaches (i.e., narrative inquiry, phenomenology, ethnography, case study, and grounded theory). Accordingly, defining qualitative research in its entirety is an elusive venture, with many scholars asserting that there is “no general agreement about the conduct of … qualitative inquiry; perhaps there never will or can be consensus …” (Eisner & Peshkin, 1990, p. 1). Few authors document a specific or working definition, providing broad definitions that capture fundamental concepts: “qualitative researchers seek answers to their questions in the real world … They gather what they see, hear, and read from people and places and from events and activities” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 4). Others have attempted more capacious definitions:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. The practices transform the world. They turn the world in a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self … qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008a, p. 3).

Strauss and Corbin (1998) described qualitative research as:

Any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification. It can refer to research about persons’ lives, lived
experiences, behaviors, emotions, and feelings as well as about organizational functioning, social movements, and cultural phenomena (p. 10).

The lack of a firm and fixed definition speaks to the dynamic, ever-evolving, and progressive nature of qualitative inquiry - the pursuit of a discrete definition is an insurmountable one. For this reason, researchers are increasingly required to provide clear and direct explanations (as opposed to definitions) of their chosen method to make apparent the process on which their research is founded (Suddaby, 2006). In response to this call for transparency, this chapter is dedicated to the stipulation of the philosophical underpinnings and procedural elements of the chosen grounded theory method.

3.1 Grounded Theory

First developed by Glaser and Strauss in the 1960s at the University of California, grounded theory has become the most prodigiously cited qualitative research method in the social sciences (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007) spanning the disciplines of psychology (Dodson & Dickert, 2004), mental health nursing (Lakeman, 2013), environmental medicine (Gustafsson, Dellve, Edlund, & Hagberg, 2003), and education (Kirchhoff & Lawrenz, 2011) amongst others. With its origins firmly rooted in sociology, grounded theory emphasises the importance of developing an understanding of human behaviour through discovery and induction rather than from hypothesis testing and deduction. The fundamental question in grounded theory is thus: if we assume that meaning is conferred onto the social world through the interaction of actors, can these social processes then be investigated?

Grounded theory enables the researcher to construct a theoretical account of the general features of a given research topic whilst simultaneously grounding this account in empirical observation and data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Theories that are generated through the grounded theory method utilise gerunds (a noun made from a verb by adding “-ing”),
focusing primarily on the processes and trajectories that result in identifiable stages and phases (Glaser, 1978, 1998). The ultimate outcome is a substantive theory that identifies analytic configurations (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and makes lucid the synthesis of descriptive information through theoretical concepts and relational statements. A focus on process is central:

> Bringing process into the analysis is essential. Process can be the organizing thread or central category of theory, or it can take a less prominent role. Regardless of the role it plays, process can be thought of as the difference between a snapshot and a moving picture … Theory without process is missing a vital part of its story … (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 179).

Glaser and Strauss’ split in the early development of grounded theory resulted in a bifurcation - the Glaserian (Glaser, 1992) and the Straussian (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) schools of thought emerged - diverging primarily in methodological rather than philosophical regards. The crux of this dichotomy relates to the adopted coding paradigm, the Glaserian school offers a collection of concepts (i.e., a coding family) that guide the researcher in developing theoretical sensitivity. Strauss’ coding paradigm focuses on the relationships between the codes, asking questions such as ‘What conditions caused or influenced concepts and categories?’ and ‘What are the associated effects or consequences?’ (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The schools differ in a number of other ways, some negligible and others fundamental to research direction and execution (see Appendix 2).

The split in methodological trajectories eventually led to the inception of the constructivist tradition, most strongly associated with the writings of Charmaz (1995, 2006). Discussions of ontology quickly arose as constructivist grounded theory (CGT) embraced the epistemological position of subjectivism. Charmaz (2006) acknowledged that interactions between the researcher and the participant could not be wholly objective and that the
researcher and participant both play an active role in generating data (Gergen, 1985, 2001). Concepts of ‘truth’ and ‘reality’ were positioned within temporal, cultural, and structural contexts (Charmaz, 2006) such that researchers were understood to “construct their respective products from the fabric of the interactions, both witnessed and lived” (Charmaz, 2006, p.178). This did not, however, preclude the need to present a chain of irrefutable evidence - for every concept and interpretation produced the researcher ought to demonstrate a compilation of instances that led to its construction.

Given these different trajectories, Bryant and Charmaz (2007) define the grounded theory method as comprising a “systematic, inductive, and comparative approach for conducting inquiry for the purpose of constructing theory” (p. 1). Constructivist grounded theory differs from the Glaserian and Straussian traditions due to its focus on “how data, analysis, and methodological strategies become constructed and takes into account the research contexts and researchers’ positions, perspectives, priorities, and interactions” (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007, p. 10). Essentially, CGT “assumes the relativism of multiple social realities, recognises the mutual creation of knowledge by the viewer and the viewed, and aims toward interpretive understanding of subjects’ meanings” (Charmaz, 2000, p. 510).

Grounded theory followers are an anomaly in forensic psychology research, of the few studies using this approach some have adopted the Straussian principles (e.g., Joyce, Dillane, & Vasquez, 2013; McCormack, Hudson, & Ward, 2002), some prefer the constructivist model (e.g., Reynolds, 2012), and others have opted for a combination of the two (e.g., Webster & Beech, 2000). The blending of approaches can be challenging, with some authors contending that “boundaries between the two should be maintained rather than a synthesis attempted” as it may “violate the philosophical underpinnings of both” (Heath & Cowley, 2004).

For the purposes of the current research, a constructivist approach was adopted for
several reasons. Firstly, CGT reflects a shift toward social constructivist and postmodernism doctrines and as such was deemed to be more compatible with contemporary styles of thinking (McCann & Clark, 2003a; McCann & Clark, 2003b). Second, CGT takes into account the broader environmental and contextual (i.e., macro) factors that may influence the phenomenon under investigation, encouraging the production of theory that is both relevant and compatible to the research setting. Third, as with all grounded theory approaches, the constructivist framework enabled for theorising in a novel area of research through the production of a middle-range theory that was ‘grounded’ in the data – identified in, and developed in relation to, the interpretation of people experiencing the phenomenon (Gephart, 2004). Finally, and most prominently perhaps, was the researcher’s own acceptance of the effect of the subjective interrelations between the researcher and the participant on the construction of meaning (Hayes & Oppenheim, 1997). Thus, for the purposes of the current research the researcher acknowledged herself as a constituent of the research endeavour, having the disposition of a research apparatus rather than an impartial observer.

### 3.2 Methodological Tenets of Grounded Theory

In developing the grounded theory method, Glaser and Strauss drew on the philosophical traditions of pragmatism and early symbolic interactionism (Suddaby, 2006). The adoption of the pragmatist stance resulted in the rejection of the existence of a scientific truth and the acceptance of science as an act of observation. The adopted tenants of symbolic interactionism led to the rejection of the behaviourist notion that human behaviour could be entirely explained and understood through observation of external stimuli (Locke, 2001). By placing the interpretive process at the core of scientific inquiry, grounded theory was presented as a practical research method that could analyse “the actual production of meanings and concepts used by social actors in real settings” (Gephart, 2004, p. 457).

Hood (2007) argued that the philosophical underpinnings offered by the pragmatism
and symbolic interactionism traditions can be seen in the three central pillars of the grounded theory method – constant comparison, theoretical sampling, and theoretical saturation. In constant comparison, data are collected and comparatively analysed simultaneously. Charmaz (2006) described this process as “taking comparisons from data and reaching up to construct abstraction and then down to tie these abstractions to data” (p. 181). In this way, the CGT method produces qualitative codes that arise from or within the data. Theoretical sampling dictates that any decisions made about data selection must be determined on the basis of the theory that is being developed rather than on pre-determined hypotheses. Theoretical sampling is informed by the logic of abduction, in which iterative processes of induction and deduction drive theory development. Finally, the development of theory occurs through the theoretical saturation of categories identified in the data by the researcher. The GTM aims for analytic generalisability, as such grounded theorists make claims about the plausibility of the theorised elements, not their expressions in a population.

Bryant and Charmaz (2007) agree that the GTM was a profound methodological development but contend that the initial formulation of the method maintained elements of the positivist, objectivist tradition. They dispute the contention that there is a reality that is “unitary, knowable, and waiting to be discovered” (p. 34) and propose that the researcher’s interpretation supplements the iterative spiral of purposive data gathering and analysis. The back and forth movement between the data and the conceptual elements being developed encapsulate the assumption that the phenomenon being investigated is born out of a complex, ambiguous and dynamic vacuum within which “answers become questionable and questions ultimately produce answers” (Strauss, 1993, p. 19). The core thesis of GTM states that the universe is “marked by tremendous fluidity; it won't and can't stand still. It is a universe where fragmentation, splintering, and disappearance are the mirror images of appearance, emergence, and coalescence … nothing is strictly determined” (Strauss, 1993, p. 19).
Consequently, any methodology that attempts to understand such a complex phenomenon must be one of complexity itself (Charmaz, 2000) rather than one that is cloaked in positivist-oriented claims. For this reason, numerous practical considerations need to be taken into account to insure the materialisation of research aims. The following section outlines the practical issues pertaining to the research question, data collection, data analysis, and memo-writing.

3.2.1 The research question.

A grounded theory study begins with a statement identifying the topic area, conceived only “in terms of a general disciplinary perspective” (Dey, 1999, p. 3). The research question sets forth the parameters of the research project and is typically pitched at a descriptive rather than explanatory level to strategically avoid the offering of any specific hypotheses. Open-ended statements are employed to provide for sufficient flexibility and freedom. This scope for divergence is met with restraint to limit distraction offered by unrelated or unproductive avenues likely to lead to infinite pathways. From this initial opening, the study continually narrows toward an area of particular concern: with action and process (e.g., ‘How do people do x?’) and states and conditions (e.g., ‘Why do people do x?’) being the primary motivators (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

3.2.2 Data collection.

Grounded theory is compatible with a variety of data collection techniques including interviews, observations, videos and focus groups. Regardless of the chosen technique/s the key to data collection is the principle of theoretical sampling, a critical strategy for building a grounded theory that asks the questions of ‘What groups or subgroups do I target next?’ and ‘For what theoretical purpose?’ (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). While early stages of data
collection call for openness and flexibility, theoretical sampling leads to the refinement and ultimate saturation of existing and increasingly analytic categories. Theoretical sampling manifests itself through continued sampling and coding of data until novel instances of variation for existing categories cease to emerge (Charmaz, 2006). At this point, a handful of categories and subcategories encapsulate the bulk of the available data. It is important to note that although many researchers strive for complete saturation of categories, modifications and changes in perspective may occur at any time;

When generation of theory is the aim, however, one is constantly alert to emergent perspectives, what will change and help develop the theory. These perspectives can easily occur on the final day of study or when the manuscript is reviewed in page proof: so the published word is not the final one, but only a pause in the never-ending process of generating theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 40).

3.2.3 Data analysis.

Data analysis in qualitative research involves systematically alienating the properties of concepts whilst simultaneously contrasting them with incoming information. Coding constitutes the most primitive of such processes and serves as “the pivotal link between collecting data and developing emergent theory to explain these data. Through coding, you define what is happening in the data and begin to grapple with what it means” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 46) – ergo refining the dimensions of the research problem. Essentially, coding refers to the attachment of linguistic labels to textual data (Schwandt, 2007), allowing for analytical meaning to transpire.

The coding procedures of the grounded theory method consist of at least two principal phases: (i) an initial phase involving the labelling of each word, line or segment of data, followed by (ii) a focused and selective stage that utilises the most prominent or frequently
occurring codes to sort, synthesise, integrate, and organise the rich textual data. It should be noted here that coding paradigms vary notably across the established schools of thought. The Glaserian approach comprises three stages – open coding, selective coding and theoretical coding (see Glaser, 1978; 2005). Strauss’ strand also consists of three, albeit vastly disparate, stages – open coding, axial coding\(^{15,16}\) and selective coding (see Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Given adherence to CGT, the current research will place focus on the coding procedure as posited by Charmaz (2006).

According to Charmaz (2006), coding begins with an initial phase of analysis wherein the researcher remains open to all possible directions indicated by the data. Charmaz (2006) encourages researcher curiosity and the asking of questions such as: ‘What is this data a study of?’, ‘What does the data suggest?’, ‘From whose point of view?’ and ‘What theoretical category does this specific datum indicate?’ (p. 47). The presumption within these questions leads the researcher to code data as action, such that some codes constitute lower level abstractions (i.e., descriptive codes) whilst others fashion higher level abstractions (i.e., analytic codes). Descriptive labels – perhaps derived from words and/or phrases used in vivo - are attached to discrete instances of phenomena and new, low-level categories frequently arise. As coding progresses, the researcher is able to form higher-level categories that systematically integrate the lower-level categories into coherent, analytical units. This coding paradigm allows categories to be arranged in a hierarchical way, such that some constitute the core whilst others lie in the periphery.

For many grounded theorists, line-by-line coding constitutes the first key step (Glaser, 1978). Strauss and Corbin (1998) define axial coding as the act of “relating categories to subcategories along the lines of their properties and dimensions” (p. 124). For an extensive description of axial coding refer to Strauss (1987).

\(^{15}\) Although CGT does not necessarily oppose the application of axial coding, it was not explicitly utilised in the current research. The primary reasons for this pertained to its overly restrictive nature and its loss of prominence in the most recent publications proceeding from eminent followers of Straussian grounded theory (see Corbin & Strauss, 2008).
1978)\textsuperscript{17}, giving new insights into the data (Holton, 2007) and reducing the likelihood that the researcher merely superimposes his or her preconceived notions (Charmaz, 2006). Key to this process is the concept of interpretation or the identification of multiple meanings of an event, object or experience that enables for the identification of themes which best consolidate the content of the raw data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008b). Given that constructivism “assumes the relativism of multiple social realities, recognises the mutual creation of knowledge by the viewer and the viewed, and aims toward interpretive understandings of subjects’ meanings” (Charmaz, 2000, p. 510) coding unequivocally represents the analyst’s impressionistic understanding of what is being described in the experiences, words, and interactions expressed by the participant. However, this is not “an imprimatur for anarchy or for ignorance” (Sandelowski, 1994, p. 58), qualitative researchers are not free to make wild forays into fancy; nor can they be ignorant of the logic and aesthetic of their research method (Sandelowski, 1994). Rather acknowledging that “there is a difference between an open mind and an empty head” (Dey, 1999, p. 251) denotes the need to present evidence for derived conceptualisations - achieved through the iterative process of the CGT method and ongoing reflective journaling.

Whatever unit of data (e.g., line-by-line, sentence-by-sentence, paragraph-by-paragraph, and page-by-page) is being used in the coding process the task requires ongoing interaction with, and immersion in, the data “to dissect them meaningfully while keeping the relations between the parts intact” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 56). To ensure that coding maintains momentum, the researcher constantly swings back and forth between the identification of similarities among, and differences between, emerging categories (i.e., constant comparative analysis). Constant comparison ensures that the researcher does not

\textsuperscript{17} By 1992, Glaser disavowed line-by-line coding, stating that it leads to an overconceptualisation of the incident and generates too great a number of categories and properties (p. 40). Nonetheless, he argued that it is at the researcher’s discretion to select the most pronounced codes and compare these across incidents.
merely build up a collection of categories but rather anatomises them into smaller units of meaning to unveil the full diversity and complexity of the data.

New, fruitful categories that emerge from this early stage of data analysis serve as the focus for further data collection. Sampling is thus theoretically oriented, with a strong direction toward conceptual theory. This is termed theoretical sampling and commonly defined as “the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes and analyses his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them …” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 45). It is the checking of emerging theory against reality through the sampling of incidents that may challenge or elaborate its developing claims.

Interlinked closely with this propensity to be true to the data is the doctrine of theoretical sensitivity. Theoretical sensitivity refers to the personal qualities of the researcher and points to an awareness of the subtleties of meaning - “having insight, the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand, and capability to separate the pertinent from that which isn’t” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 42). It allows the researcher to move from a descriptive to analytic level, developing a theory that is grounded, conceptually dense and amiably integrated. Knowledge gained from existing literature can enhance sensitivity to subtle nuances in data. However the researcher is discouraged from becoming enamoured with previous work so as to avoid imposing it on the data. As Becker (1986, p. 149) stated “use the literature, don’t let it use you”.

Focused coding (referred to as selective coding by both Glaser and Strauss) comprises the second phase; herein the codes become more directed, selective and conceptual (Charmaz, 2006). The most significant and/or frequent codes are applied to sort, synthesise, and explain large units of data allowing for events, interactions, and perspectives that were not previously lucid to come into view. The focused coding stage may prompt a return to open coding, especially so if compelling avenues of exploration arise.
The final phase of coding is referred to as theoretical coding and occurs when core categories have become saturated. Theoretical codes conceptualise underlying social processes at an abstract level such that patterns of behaviour are identified and related. The coding procedures implemented prior to this phase attempted to fracture the data and cluster it according to abstract similarity. Conversely, theoretical coding attempts to knit the fractured pieces back together to conceptualise causal relationships between the derived hypotheses (Glaser, 1992). In other words, theoretical coding is the process by which identified codes are related to each other and their relationships examined.

3.2.4 Memo-writing.

“Memos and diagrams begin as rather rudimentary representations of thought and grow in complexity, density, clarity, and accuracy” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 118) ultimately constituting a vital element of theory development. Memo-writing can be understood as the researcher’s private diarising that often renders a disparate vantage point. Recording the definition of categories, providing justification for chosen labels, tracing the emergent relationship between categories, and communicating the progressive assimilation of higher- and lower-level categories endorses integrative awareness of the emergent theory. Memos can be long or short, abstract or concrete, integrative or original, graphical or verbal - nevertheless, they must be dated, contain a heading, and specify to which section/s of data they pertain. Diagrams serve a similar function - representing thought through visual depictions that capture concepts at their most bare and fundamental level.

Table 10 and Figure 2 provide examples of a memo and a diagram produced by the researcher during the course of data analysis. The memo in Table 10 highlights the researcher’s reflections on the coding process as it related to a particular segment of a particular interview. It emphasises how the researcher’s impressions about a particular
experience were analysed. Figure 2 depicts a diagram formulating the conceptual relationships between situational features, physiological arousal and decision-making. Such diagrams were commonly drawn to record the researcher’s thoughts regarding higher-order concepts.

Table 10. A memo for an interview conducted in the current research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>12th of December 2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I didn’t bother them trying to get details at that stage&quot;, not sure how to code this line. Seems to me to indicate a decision point at which the officer decided not to seek further information from the paramedics. He decided on this as he perceived them to be occupied with tending to the injured victims. This may indicate that he perceived the health of the victim as paramount. However, he later goes on to state that the paramedics were female and expresses concern regarding this. It is possible that he did not believe the information gleaned from the paramedics would be viable. I am not sure where this fits. I don't think I have an existing category that encapsulates this kind of decision point. It does not entirely fit the 'ambulance' code as the decision point does not directly relate to the fact that the informants were paramedics. It does not fit the 'information' code perfectly either as it relates mostly to lack of information. In this case he could have had access to the information had he gathered it from the paramedics. I will place this data under heuristics and biases for the present moment as I believe it was a &quot;shortcut&quot; decision based on his previous dealings with paramedics and other interorganisational members.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 2. A sample diagram used as part of reflexive practice.

- Memory loss/High level of stress leads to disoriented state
- Options unclear
- May take some time to “snap out of it” and focus on the situation
- Training/experience consolidated into decision-making, rational options considered and most appropriate chosen.
- Management of situation primary focus.
- Junior officers may struggle here, limited experience means they have few templates to apply to situations. Mentoring very beneficial here.
- Threat seems to comprise; weapon presence, number of offenders, and demeanour of offender/s
3.3 Summary

Grounded theory involves the progressive identification and integration of categories of meaning from data that “happens sequentially, subsequently, simultaneously, serendipitously” (Glaser, 1998, p. 1). This process is concisely encapsulated in Fernandez’s (2004) high-level model, which highlights the iterative spiral of purposive data gathering and analysis. This spiral drives a process through which the researcher constructs, assesses, and develops theoretical concepts that become increasingly abstract. The back and forth movement between data and the conceptual elements being developed continues until a theory, that accounts for all variation, has been constructed.

It should be noted that the method has been criticised by those prescribing to the positivist tradition who often claim that the move away from the objective truth and towards the doctrine of verstehen\textsuperscript{18} has led to biased, small scaled, and error prone research. The accuracy of recall is often argued to deduct from the accuracy of research findings (Nagurney et al., 2005) with the fallible nature of human memory perceived as a severe constraint on reliability. The development of guiding frameworks (e.g., Elliott, Fischer, & Rennie, 1999) has been deemed frivolous given the necessary reliance on researcher judgment – likely to be impacted by a host of subjective factors such as the skill, insight, capabilities, experience, and style of each analyst (Patton, 1990).

Although strict adherence to the traditionally defined principles of validity and reliability cannot be achieved in qualitative work, several writers have demonstrated how qualitative researchers can incorporate measures to increase the rigor and trustworthiness of qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Silverman, 2001). An assessment of how well the criteria were managed in the current thesis is provided in Chapter V.

\textsuperscript{18} Verstehen is a German term coined by the German philosopher and historian, Wilhelm Dilthey. The term encapsulates the aim of the human sciences, that is, to understand meaning from the agent’s point of view (Schwandt, 2007).
This chapter has introduced the CGT method and set it within a methodological spiral of the grounded theory family and the qualitative research tradition more broadly. Several evaluative criteria and limitations of the design were outlined and will be further explored in the following chapters. Having provided a methodological orientation for the current inquiry, the following chapter addresses the data-collection and theory-development process as well as the key ethical principles pertaining to the research context.
CHAPTER FOUR: METHOD

In this chapter the processes of data collection and theoretical development are presented within the context of Charmaz’s (2006) constructivist grounded theory (CGT) method. The chapter addresses the strengths and suitability of the chosen approach and considers the data from which the grounded theory of police officer decision-making was generated. The rationale of theoretical sampling in informing the selection of data is explored and the process of data collection and analysis is further detailed. The chapter also focuses on how the research adhered to professional standards of ethical research practice.

4.1 Tabula Rasa

Within the field of grounded theory research, the use of existent literature represents a critical and divisive issue. Glaser and Strauss (1967) originally recommended that the researcher enter the field with the absence of any preconceived notions as a way of protecting against constraint, contamination or inhibition induced by established theoretical concepts. However, divorcing oneself entirely from all existing literature, experience, and expectation has proven difficult (e.g., Charmaz, 2003).

Undertaking an early literature review can provide a cogent rationale for the research endeavour (Coyne & Cowley, 2006; McGhee, Marland, & Atkinson, 2007): highlighting pertinent gaps in existing knowledge (Creswell, 2007), contextualising the project (Urquhart, 2007), and facilitating the development of theoretical sensitivity (Denzin, 2002; McCann & Clark, 2003b). Above all, knowledge of the literature safeguards against severe conceptual and methodological pitfalls and aids the researcher in becoming aware of, rather than remaining numb to, unhelpful or unjustifiable preconceptions (Maijala, Paavilainen, & Astedt-Kurki, 2003). As Strubing (2007) noted, the fundamental point is “not whether
previous knowledge should be used in actual data analysis; the important insight lies rather in how to make proper use of previous knowledge” (p. 587).

For the purpose of the current thesis, the literature review was produced within the first year of candidature – a requirement set forth by the education provider. The researcher remained aware of the dangers posed by an early literature review, that predominantly being the possibility of indiscriminate application of established concepts to the current data (see Glaser & Strauss, 1967). To counteract this risk, the researcher continuously engaged in the process of reflexivity – defined here as an active, intersubjective practice of developing self-awareness regarding the relationship between the investigator and the research environment (Robson, 2011). To this end memoing was utilised to encapsulate the researcher’s internal dialogue; chronicling any changes in theoretical knowledge and demonstrating fidelity to the worldview of the research participants. Given continued immersion in the data throughout the latter period of candidature the researcher made the conscious decision to periodically pause analysis and engage in other research tasks so as to allow for awareness of any subtleties to emerge and to promote insight into the distinction between “that which is created by the researcher and the real” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 47).

4.2 Construction of the Research Question

In the original articulation of the grounded theory approach, Glaser and Strauss (1967) indicated that research questions ought to exclusively be borne out of the research field. For the novice, strict adherence to this philosophy generally conflicts with various dissertation requirements (e.g., the production of progress reports and ethics committee applications) and is thus frequently deemed implausible. The verity of this impasse has been acknowledged and integrated into more contemporary applications of the grounded theory method (e.g., McGhee et al., 2007) such that it is now common practice to identify research questions prior to entering the field.
In the current project, initial research questions were constructed in consultation with the research supervisors, the Victoria Police Blueprint 2012-2015 (Victoria Police, 2013) and the Victoria Police Research Agenda (Victoria Police, 2014d) to ensure the research was cohesive with, and complementary to, the strategic objectives and priorities of Victoria Police. Specification of the research problem occurred with reference to the literature review. Through this process it became apparent that the current research was seeking to investigate how participants made decisions in fast-paced and potentially stressful encounters. The set research questions, outlined below, were exploratory in nature and sought to investigate processes (Maxwell, 2013):

(i) How does police officer decision-making unfold amidst dynamic and fast-paced circumstances?

(ii) What information or strategies do police officers use to arrive at a decision outcome?

For a detailed discussion of how these lines of inquiry narrowed and transformed throughout the research process please refer to Section 4.5.

4.3 Developing and Testing of Research Instruments

The research interview constituted the rudimentary feature of the data collection phase. The questions utilised to probe and generate data were founded on the initial conceptual framework and the literature review, directing the conversation toward decision-making. Open-ended, neutral, clear, and concise questions (McNamara, 2009) were utilised to tap into several domains of decision-making including identification and rejection of options, experience, training, time constraints, group dynamics, information availability and characteristics of the suspect (see Appendix 3).

Following the development of the preliminary interview guide, pilot interviews were
conducted with two police officers. Reflecting on this experience, it was decided that elements of the critical incident technique (CIT; Flanagan, 1954) needed to be implemented in order to obtain more detailed accounts and to extract tacit knowledge. The critical incident approach refers to “an epistemological process in which qualitative, descriptive data are provided about real-life accounts” (Di Salvo, Nikkel, & Monroe, 1989, p. 554). The routine approach dictates that one positive and one negative incident be elicited from each participant (e.g., Edvardsson & Roos, 2001; Redfern & Norman, 1999). The current study, however, placed greater focus on differences in decision-making across similar incidents. As such, participants were initially asked to recall one incident in which they felt they had to make a quick decision with later probing eliciting similar incidents which were than compared to the original incident.

4.4 Research Ethics

Everyone agrees that among the highest duties of academics is to make sure that the human beings they study – fellow citizens they probe, query, prod, and palpate – are treated with dignity and respect (Shea, 2000, p. 28).

The planning and construction of the research proposal constituted one of the first key steps in systematically delineating the research and cementing its applicability and pertinence to Victoria Police. It was imperative that the researcher pre-empted and clarified methodological strategies and design issues prior to seeking ethical approval. To this end, several meetings were held with Victoria Police. Additionally, the writer conducted background research into Victoria Police and the policing culture more broadly (e.g., Cochran & Bromley, 2003; Paoline, Myers, & Worden, 2000) to establish context. From this, the following ethical issues were identified as being especially pertinent to the collection, use, and dissemination of data arising from the current project.
4.4.1 Informed consent.

Defined as a person knowingly, voluntarily, intelligently, and in a clear and manifest way giving his consent (Armiger, 1977), informed consent comprised one of the key ethical considerations. As a means of upholding the rights and dignity of autonomous persons, participating members were made aware of the purpose, procedure, and foreseeable risks and benefits of the project. Participants reviewed printed copies of the Explanatory Statement (see Appendix 4) and the Consent Form (see Appendix 5) during the pre-interview phase. Written informed consent was judged to be too impractical for telephone interviews rather oral consent was obtained through a pre-constructed script (see Appendix 6). Participants were asked to sign the consent form in face-to-face interviews; participants were asked to explicitly verbalise their willingness to participate in the case of telephone interviews.

The researcher remained acutely aware of the elements of command responsibility - the primary constituent of which being the superior-subordinate relationship (Dempsey & Forst, 2012). Given that this relationship type is commonly characterised by hierarchical dynamics, there was an identified risk that superiors could utilise various control systems to influence or encourage subordinates to participate. To minimise the probability of coercion, the purpose of the research project, the risks of participating, and the right to withdraw at any time were made explicit through both written and spoken modes of communication:

I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw at any stage prior to the end of the interview without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way (see Consent Form, p. 1, Appendix 5).

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19 Coercion arises when individuals feel as though they cannot refuse to participate, if refusal causes a perceived substantial loss to the individual, or if individuals believe that participation is not entirely voluntary (Scott-Jones, 2000).
4.4.2 Risk of harm.

Given the possibility that sensitive topics would be explored in depth, the risk of emotional and other harm (i.e., social and economic) to both the participant and the researcher were acknowledged in the early stages of the design phase. The researcher was aware of the literature documenting the risk of harm associated with research interviews (e.g., Rew, Bechtel, & Sapp, 1993), particularly so as participants were asked to convey stories possibly comprising personal and intimate properties. Conversely, the writer was also cognisant of the considerable evidence indicating that research participants experience interviews as validating and consistently welcome the opportunity for introspection and growth (e.g., Ortiz, 2001). As such, to make the assumption that all interviews are potentially harmful was to remove participant agency in its entirety. Consequently, in the current research project participants had control over what they said, how they said it, or whether they said anything at all (Cassell & Symon, 1998).

Several other harm-minimisation strategies were implemented:

(i) police officers who reported a current diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) were excluded from participation;

(ii) the selection of an incident was done collaboratively, if it was perceived that a particular incident would cause emotional discomfort another was chosen;

(iii) a debrief occurred at the conclusion of interview to gauge the participant’s level of distress and allow for participant feedback;

(iv) participants were made fully aware of the support and welfare services available to them, including services internal to Victoria Police as well as those external to the organisation; and,
the researcher sought supervision during periods where personal distress was experienced.

No participant reported distress ratings that would suggest an adverse reaction\textsuperscript{20} or trigger a formal referral process. The researcher sought supervision from the secondary supervisor once during the data collection phase to reaffirm a positive work-life balance.

4.4.3 Confidentiality.

For qualitative researchers maintaining participant confidentiality whilst presenting rich, detailed accounts of social life presents as a unique challenge (Kaiser, 2009). Section 3.1.10 of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (National Health and Medical Research Council; NHMRC, 2007) concisely stipulates the convention of confidentiality in the following passage:

Participants are often easily identifiable … and the information they provide may be sensitive. For those reasons, care should be taken that participants are not identifiable by the information they provide, unless they have agreed to be identified. Special care should be taken to protect the identity of participants when disseminating information and storing material (p. 26).

In the current project, confidentiality was addressed during the design phase and at three supplementary intervals: (i) data collection, (ii) data analysis, and (iii) dissemination of research findings. In maximising the protection of participant identities and/or information, the confidential nature of the succeeding interaction was made explicit at the pre-interview phase. Research materials were stored in a restricted access area - a secure locked cabinet at

\textsuperscript{20} Highest rating of discomfort in the sample pertained to three subjective reports of “a little” anxious and one report of “quite a bit” distressed. All other ratings fell into the “none at all” category.
the Centre for Forensic Behavioural Science - such that access was entirely controlled by the researcher. Given the small sample size and the use of excerpts it was fundamental that statements provided by participants could not be attributed to specific individuals or locations. To this end, any identifying information (i.e., names of persons, names of police stations, identified locations, personnel rank) was removed during the transcription process and re-examined during data analysis, with no identifying information included in this thesis.

4.4.4 Ethics approval.

A proposal was subsequently drafted and parallel applications were made to appropriate research ethics committees. Ethical clearance was first received from the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC; see Appendix 7) and the Victoria Police Research Coordinating Committee (RCC; see Appendix 8). With approval granted from the RCC, an application was filed and later approved by the Victoria Police Human Research Ethics Committee (VPHREC; see Appendix 9). Following the transition of the Doctor of Psychology (Clinical & Forensic) from Monash University to Swinburne University during February of 2014, ethical approval was sought and granted from Swinburne University Human Research Ethics Committee (SUHREC; see Appendix 10).

4.5 Fieldwork

In order to develop a rich, well-scoped conceptualisation of police officer decision-making the first key concern involved the definition of the sample universe – the totality of persons from which cases were to be sampled. To delineate the sample a set of inclusion and exclusion criteria were specified, stipulating that participants must have been operational at

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21 In late 2012, students enrolled in the Doctor of Psychology (Clinical & Forensic) at Monash University were informed that the program was being disestablished. The ultimate outcome was the transfer of the doctorate program and the enrolled cohorts to Swinburne University. For the writer, this occurred at the onset of her third year of candidature.
the time of the interview and between the ages of 18-65 years. Officers who self-reported or whose Sergeant identified them as being under investigation regarding a critical incident or who were experiencing trauma symptoms at the time of interview were to be excluded from participation. No officer that volunteered to participate disclosed having a current diagnosis of PTSD or was involved in an ongoing investigation. No other demographic, geographical, physical or psychological homogeneity was sought.

Frontline response by Victoria Police is provided through 54 Police Service Areas (PSAs) and 329 stations dispersed across four regions; North West Metro, Southern Metro, Eastern and Western (see Figure 3). The Eastern region was most represented in the current sample, comprising seven out of the 12 (58%) stations visited. Victoria Police data indicate that the Eastern region comprises 17 of the 54 PSAs and 116 of the 329 stations (35%). Two out of the 12 (17%) stations were based in the Southern Metro region, an area that has a total of 9 PSAs and 29 stations (9%). The North West is also a smaller region with a total of 14 PSAs and 38 stations (11%). One of the 12 (8%) stations visited fell within its capacity. The Western region was the least represented in the current sample, with only two of the stations (17%) falling within its geography. The Western region is the biggest in Victoria, with 14 PSAs and 146 stations (45%). Access to participants in the Western region was particularly challenging as many did not express interest in partaking in the research.

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22 This did not include telephone interviews which were conducted with individual officers. The inability to interview other members at the same station or to observe the social context made generalisability to the station implausible.
In selecting stations for the research project, the researcher was directed by the aim to elicit multiple views on police officer decision-making from variously ranked officers located across disparate stations. Initial entry into the field provided a “point of departure” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 100) and was guided by the broad questions of ‘How does police officer decision-making unfold amidst dynamic and fast-paced circumstances?’ and ‘What information or strategies do police officers use to arrive at a decision outcome?’

In the first collection of interviews, the concepts of experience and training were identified as areas where differences in decision-making were particularly pronounced (see Figure 4). To this end, both experienced and novice police officers were interviewed (see Table 11 for a summary) to synthesise the identified concepts and formulate the emerging categories of information processing and intuition.
Table 11. Frequency and percentage frequency distributions of participants classified by years of experience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience (years)</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<td>11-15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11%</td>
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<tr>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥ 31</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Through further focus and investigation, three additional lines of inquiry emerged and prompted further theoretical sampling (see Figure 4). Prior to commencing the second round of interviews a series of questions were designed to further explore the general themes that had emerged from the first interviews. These included a greater focus on how experienced officers differed in their decision-making capacity from their inexperienced counterparts, what situational characteristics contributed to the described sense of ambiguity, and what the identified regional variation could reveal about the police culture. Stratified sampling was hence employed to target these specified geographical and psychological stratification categories.
Figure 4. Development of lines of research inquiry.

**FIELD ENTRY**

How do police officers make decisions? What is the process by which split-second decisions unfold?

Initial interviews conducted with variously experienced operational police officers.

**Key themes in first round of interviews**

- How does experience impact decision-making?
- How does training impact decision-making?

**Key themes in second round of interviews**

- Experienced officers engage in communication, “bigger picture” perspective, complex information processing
- Situational characteristics (e.g., third parties, police partnerships and suspect characteristics) impact decision-making
- Regional variation in resources, police-community relations, and strategic options implemented

**Categories**

- Experienced decision-maker
- Situational ambiguity
- Police culture
4.5.1 Data collection.

Research participants were identified through self-expressed interest following the state-wide dissemination of an approved email template (see Appendix 11) and the posting of an advert on the Victoria Police intranet (see Appendix 12). The onus was thus on participants to initiate contact (via email or telephone) with the researcher, this provided some protection against coercion within the rank hierarchy. Subsequent to received expressions of interest, a time and location for the interview/s were scheduled.

Face-to-face interviews ($n = 38$) transpired when police stations expressed interest in participating. Telephone interviews ($n = 6$) took place when individual officers expressed interest in the research, whilst the collective station at which they were based did not. All participants received the Explanatory Statement prior to interview. Explanatory Statements were emailed to officers engaged in telephone interviews prior to the scheduled interview time.

Various components of rapport - “establishing trust and familiarity, showing genuine interest, assuring confidentiality and not being judgmental” (Glassner & Loughlin, 1987, p. 35) – were deemed imperative to the interview process. Sometimes, rapport is developed through ongoing reciprocal relationships other times during brief, one-off encounters. In the current study, relationships with participants were ephemeral and fleeting, their purpose and duration entirely predicated on the research interview. Consequently, rapport needed to occur rapidly and concurrently with the interview. With such limited scope, several strategies were utilised to encourage participants to feel at ease in disclosing their personal experiences. During the opening of the interview, the researcher (i) clarified the purpose of the project, (ii) discussed why the interviewee’s knowledge was sought, (iii) detailed the ways in which the outcomes of the research may be of interest to the interviewee individually, and Victoria Police organisationally, and (iv) assured the safeguard of confidentiality. Interest was
commonly piqued. Occasionally, further rationale for the research topic and cause for the researcher’s agenda needed to be demonstrated. No participant declined to engage in the interview.

The interviewing relationship adhered closely to Weiss’ propositions (1994, p. 65), such that the researcher and the interviewee collaborated in the production of information that was ultimately useful to the research project. The researcher guided the areas of exploration whilst allowing the interviewee to freely express his or her opinions and reflections. Queries made by the researcher did not stem from idle curiosity rather targeted information that the participant may not have otherwise made available. In being privy to the participants’ internal and external observations, the researcher expressed genuine respect to the participants’ integrity such that their appraisals, choices, motives, and personal worth were not interrogated or questioned.

The most fundamental component of the interview was the attainment of concrete information regarding the research questions. To this end, participants were asked to identify and discuss a particular incident in which the decision/s they made had a significant impact upon the outcome of that situation. Occasionally, participants required some guidance in developing the incident adequately. One or more of the following techniques were utilised in such instances:

Extending: this technique was used to identify precursors or antecedents e.g., “Just talk me through how the incident unfolded, from when you arrived to when you deemed it to be over”, “What happened right before that?”

Filling in detail: when a participant did not spontaneously offer sufficient detail the researcher probed for further information e.g., “Could you elaborate a bit more on that?” “You mentioned that _____, could you walk me through that?” “So you were _____, what happened then?” “Could you say a bit more about that?”
Identifying actors: this technique was utilised to provide the incident with a social context, particular attention was given to the presence of other officers and civilian bystanders. “How many other officers were involved?”, “What was your role?”, “Were there any citizen bystanders present?”

Consultation: given the focus on decision-making processes, it was imperative to identify whether the participant consulted others in arriving at the decision outcome e.g., “Did you talk through your plan with anyone else?”, “What did you partner think?”

Inner events: this technique was used to elicit internal perceptions including emotional state, cognitions, beliefs, assumptions, and what strivings and impulses the participant experienced e.g., “When that was happening, what were the thoughts running through your mind?”, “What feelings were you experiencing at that time?”

Making indications explicit: participants that answered with a gesture or facial expression were probed for further detail by providing a reflective summary “So you felt OK”, “You were worried”.

During the interviews the researcher engaged in active listening skills (Pearson, Nelson, Titsworth, & Harter, 2006) in order to deepen her understanding of the participants’ preoccupations. Body language, gestures, and minimal verbal encouragers constituted primal aspects of demonstrating the researcher’s attentiveness; phrasing and prompts were used to further divulge reflections and insights. Occasionally, interviewees misinterpreted paraphrasing\textsuperscript{23} for clarification. More lucid lead-in phrases such as “if I’ve understood you properly, then …” or “just let me check that I’m with you. So you mean that …” were

\textsuperscript{23} In active listening, paraphrasing serves several functions. First, it is utilised to demonstrate to the interviewee the interviewer’s understanding of their message. Second, it allows the interviewee to hear and respond to an interpretation of their message and, finally, to correct or supplement their message with addition information (Louw, Todd, & Jimakorn, 2011).
adopted in later interviews as they proved more effective in conveying the researcher’s intention. Participants were given sufficient time to reflect on their responses; pauses were implemented to allow the interviewee to reflect, elaborate, and not feel rushed to provide an answer (Gordon, 1992).

Participants’ verbal and nonverbal communication cues were also monitored to ascertain their comfort with the pace, focus, and progress of the interview. Although it was deemed problematic to assign meaning to specific nonverbal gestures, the general presentation (i.e., eye contact, emblems, motor movements, paralingual cues) of the participant was considered in gauging emotional reactions. If a participant was perceived as being uncomfortable with a particular style of questioning, the researcher adjusted her approach (e.g., greater use of reflective statement rather than direct questions) to permit the flow of conversation. This occurred within the context of responsive interviewing, in which the importance of building rapport predominated.

Each interview generally lasted between 30 minutes to two hours; all interviews were audio recorded. One interview was excluded from data analysis as it was not recorded due to researcher error. No participant declined to be audio taped. In total, 44 interviews directly contributed to the current collection of research. The total sample included 8 female (18%) and 36 male (82%) operational police officers. This is largely consistent with the number of sworn female (22%) and male (78%) members as indicated by the Victoria Police Annual Report 2013-2014.

After a field contact there was often a need to pause and reflect. A contact summary sheet (see Appendix 13) was utilised to guide the iterative process, identify or modify existing codes and to re-orient the researcher to the contact when returning to it at write-up.
4.5.1.2 Reflections on the use of telephone interviews.

Reasons of economy, time, and required access to geographically dispersed participants made it necessary to conduct some telephone interviews. Although used less frequently than face-to-face interviews in qualitative research (Opdenakker, 2006), the telephone interview is nevertheless considered to be a legitimate data collection tool (Carr & Worth, 2001; Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004; Sweet, 2002). Some literature comparing face-to-face and telephone interviews has raised concern regarding the tendency for telephone participants to cease contact more readily (Chapple, 1999), respond in a more acquiescent and evasive manner (Robson, 2011), and present more cautiously in regards to self-revelation (Tourangeau & Yan, 2007). In the current research, telephone contact resulted in shorter interviews, such that no telephone interview exceeded 50 minutes. Greater verbal reinforcers were also required e.g., “uh-huh”, “I see” given the absence of visual cues (Garbett & McCormack, 2001). Although the elicitation of comprehensive and detailed responses during telephone interviews did not pose as a distinct challenge, it is not possible to speculate as to the differences in participants’ experiences across the two modalities.

4.5.2 Data preparation.

Largely emerging in linguistics and linguistic anthropology (Duranti, 1997), scholars from varied disciplines (Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999; Mishler, 1984) have recognised the centrality of transcription in qualitative research. Transcription processes can be thought of as lying on a continuum of two dominant poles, naturalism, in which every utterance is recorded in as much detail as possible, and denaturalism, wherein idiosyncratic elements of speech are not transcribed. A denaturalised approach to transcription executes a verbatim depiction of speech without fixating on intonations or involuntary vocalisations. Accuracy emanates from the substance of the interview – the meanings and perceptions created and communicated.
throughout the conversation. This approach has found particular relevance in ethnography (e.g., Agar, 1996), grounded theory (Charmaz, 2000) and critical discourse analysis (e.g., Fairclough, 2013) all of which primarily focus on the content of the interview rather than its mechanics.

Despite the widely documented variations in transcribing processes and products (Baker, 1997; Duranti, 2007), interview-based empirical studies rarely explicate the theoretically-laden decision-making process of transcription. Consequently, contemporary literature provides limited direction and guidance regarding the specifics of the transcription process (Halcomb & Davidson, 2006). Although some grounded theorists have argued that transcription produces large quantities of descriptive data (Glaser, 1998), many others have contended that a combination of verbatim transcription and notation of participants’ nonverbal behaviour is central to establishing reliability, validity and veracity (MacLean, Meyer, & Estable, 2004; Wengraf, 2001). Transcription in the current study adhered to the latter, enabling the researcher to code from verbatim transcripts and to establish an audit trail.

Initial experiences of converting audio-recorded interviews to text posed several difficulties, predominantly stemming from the need for advanced typing skills and familiarity with transcription software programs (e.g., Dragon Naturally Speaking software). Inspiration came from a colleague who suggested the use of an open source software24. Audacity appeared to be a user-friendly tool that enabled the editing of speed and other qualities of speech (e.g., pitch). Interviews were then imported into Audacity (version 2.0.6) directly from a Phillips Voice Tracer. The speed of the MP3 was decreased by 30%, allowing for segments to be simultaneously transcribed into a Microsoft Word document. The duration of each segment transcribed ranged from 20 to 40 seconds, although longer segments of audio

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24 An open source program is one that is freely available to the public and can be modified and distributed by any user. Open source programs are often developed within a community rather than by a single organisation or individual.
were transcribed where speech style was marked by good quality and intelligibility. When the
comments on the recording were not clear, the notation ‘inaudible’ was made on the
transcript.

Given the situated and consequential nature of transcribing, it was decided that the
risks (i.e., error rates as high as 60%, Poland, 1995, risks to confidentiality) of outsourcing
transcription to hired transcribers outweighed the benefits (i.e., time, resources, technical
dilemmas). Transcription took place between February 2014 and December 2014, occurring
simultaneously with data collection and promoting theoretical sampling. All material relating
to the interviews was stored on either the researcher’s desktop computer located at the Centre
for Forensic Behavioural Science or in a secure locked cabinet found at the same location.

4.5.3 Data analysis.

Although software for analysing textual data has been available since the mid-1960s,
it was not until the early 1980s that qualitative researchers discovered the advantages of
computer-assisted data analysis (Kelle, 1995). The reluctance of qualitative researchers to
integrate computers into their work certainly reflected a polarity from the mainstream
methodologies of quantitative survey and experimental design, wherein the computer had
acquired the status of an indispensable aid. The advent of the personal computer incited
several qualitative researchers to develop software that could support the analysis of
qualitative data. Three decades on and the use of CAQDA software has become
constitutional, however not without controversy.

Debate regarding CAQDA’s potential methodological merits and dangers is
ubiquitous (e.g., Richards & Richards, 1991). Critics stipulate concern regarding the
computerised procedures of coding and retrieval, positing that CAQDA’s procedures fail to
integrate situational and contextual factors (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) resulting in superficial
and circumscribed analysis. More broadly, CAQDA is perceived as attempting to confer the authority of science onto qualitative research in an attempt to destigmatise non-quantitative research approaches (Weaver & Atkinson, 1994). However, CAQDA programs can also be thought of as sophisticated index systems that allow data to be categorised, stored, and then retrieved selectively using the codes as the criteria for selection. As content analysis rarely focuses on the use of specific words but on ideas and meaning the writer tends to agree with Konopasek’s (2007) conception that:

It is always you, as the analyst, who has to do the real analysis. Because only human researchers can think. The software only provides more or less useful assistance and support to the thinking subject. It extends the researcher’s mental capabilities to organise, to remember, and to be systematic. (p. 277 emphasis in original text).

Independent of any particular method, CAQDA fundamentally involves the breaking up and disassembling of research materials into pieces, parts, elements, or units. With the data broken down into manageable pieces, the researcher engages in a process of sorting and sifting in order to assemble or reconstruct the data in a meaningful way. Given that NVivo – a qualitative data analysis computer software package produced by QSR - was designed for precisely these reasons (Richards & Richards, 1991) it was utilised in the current thesis to enter, organise, search and retrieve data as well as to code, analyse and link it (Dohan & Sanchez-Jankowski, 1998). The researcher attended a three-day training workshop in NVivo 10 for Windows (a later version of Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing, Searching and Theorizing) from Swinburne University of Technology and worked through the step-by-step animated tutorials attached to the NVivo software.

First, a project was created and all transcripts were imported from Word. In order to restrict access to the data a confidential password was created. Coding began with the reading and rereading of whole transcripts, making marginal annotations and highlighting text
relevant to the research questions. After initial themes had been identified, although they had already been well established through the process of theoretical sampling, the researcher entered the phase of open coding.

4.5.3.1 Open coding.

For any given transcript the researcher perused the participant’s words for indicators – any segment of text which made some assertion considered to be noteworthy was highlighted and placed within the corresponding node (see Figure 5 for an example). The function of the generated nodes was to store references to the coded text. Data that did not fit an existing node or were distinct from others in a meaningful, study-important way prompted the creation of a new node. Node labels were reviewed frequently and, typically, a slightly more abstract name was attributed. This reflected a move towards a conceptual and structural order that could relate the codes to one another in a coherent way whilst signifying what structural role each performed within the context of a hierarchical node tree (Moghaddam, 2006). Clear operational definitions were paramount to ensuring that the nodes were being applied consistently over time.

Open coding led to the creation of nine nodes or concepts that in some way related to the decision-making process: actor, development, junior members, organisation, partner, region, situation, strategy, and suspect – with each having a collection of auxiliary child nodes (see Appendix 13). In this way, open codes did not merely serve as a descriptor rather attempted a conceptualisation of the tendencies observed in the raw data. Open coding paved the way for the identified ideas and patterns to be abstracted and conceptualised into more comprehensive concepts in latter stages of the analysis.
Figure 5. Excerpt of open coding.

OFFICER: It’s part of that and it’s a part of, when you’ve been doing this for a long time um you’ve done it so many times you know what I mean, it’s just a habit basically.

INTER: Mm.

OFFICER: When somebody is being attacked or something you just do it, you jump in.

INTER: So your previous experience may have sort of…

OFFICER: Yea of course it did!

INTER: So in similar incidents in the past do you think you’ve ever done anything different?

OFFICER: In what way?

INTER: In sort of trying to separate people that are getting physically…

OFFICER: I’ve used batons before but I try not to use a baton. I’m a very non-violent person, I don’t like to hurt people and um so whilst that’s going on all I’m trying to do is either secure people or get them away basically. I’m not in there to fight. I hate fighting. And I’m not a puncher, I’m a wrestler. I don’t punch people. I’ve really only ever used a baton, I’ve never used a pistol so on anybody oh on one bloke but that was a long time ago, I mazed him.

4.5.3.2 Focused coding.

Having established some analytic directions through initial line-by-line analysis, focused coding was used to synthesise and explain larger segments of data (Charmaz, 2006). Each category was fleshed out, examining the situations in which it appeared, when it transformed and the relationships that emerged as a consequence. It should be noted here that due to various epistemological debates not all researchers advocate for the use of focused coding (Charmaz, 2006). Given the constructivist stance, the current study defined focused coding liberally primarily utilising it to examine relationships between concepts, identify
higher order categories, and uncover dimensions such as conditions, contexts, processes and outcomes that may have related to police officer decision-making (Charmaz, 2006).

The coding stripes function in NVivo was particularly helpful in this regard, allowing the researcher to view nodes coded to particular segments of text. This facilitated the task of comparing categories and concepts (Bringer, Johnston, & Brackenridge, 2006) by enabling a visual overview of how the nodes related to one another. For example, one of the most commonly referenced initial nodes was that of ‘rural’ geography. To develop insight into how region may contribute to decision-making, all the data coded at this node was examined by applying coding stripes to identify potential early relationships between other emergent concepts (see Appendix 13). This revealed that much of the data coded at ‘rural’ geography was often also coded at ‘community relations’, ‘rapport’ and ‘communication style’ prompting questions such as: ‘Are rural regions characterised by community-oriented policing?’, ‘Do rurally-based officers rely more on the community to perform their duties than their urban counterparts?’, and ‘Are rurally-based officers more likely to resolve situations through communication / negotiation than urban-based officers?’

Questions such as these encouraged a thorough examination of specific segments of data by searching for intersecting coding (i.e., searching for text coded at more than one node). Queries provided a flexible way to gather and explore subtests of data in order to identify patterns. For example, examination of the ‘rural’ node coding stripes revealed that references to ‘community relations’ were also coded at concepts labelled ‘resources’ and ‘creative problem solving’. By viewing all of the references coded at ‘community relations’ it could be observed that officers in rural areas were more reliant on community relations as they had limited access to resources and thus needed to engage in creative problem solving strategies (e.g., receiving help from local community members).

The sets function also facilitated the management of data by grouping together project
items that shared common features; indicating that the selected items shared at least one attribute (Bazeley, 2007). For example, early data revealed instances of negative cases in regards to training – these were placed in a set called ‘negative cases’. The set was used to scope queries, ultimately revealing that officers who expressed positive attitudes of training were either an instructor or had some previous experience in this capacity.

Another NVivo search tool that was used for conceptual and theoretical development was the matrix coding query function, allowing for the investigation of relationships between concepts and categories by searching for data coded to multiple pairs of items. For example, in order to compare how incidents were resolved across urban and rural regions a matrix coding query was created. The results are presented in a matrix as illustrated in Appendix 13, where each cell displays information concerning the corresponding pair of items. The numbers in the displayed matrix were not reflective of what strategy was actually implemented rather what options were considered. For example, rural officers considered specialist services more than urban officers did, however this option was only implemented once - at all other times the option was rejected on the basis of distance and time constraints. Thus, it was paramount to review each cell in the matrix to investigate the causes for the relationships.

Categories were linked with subcategories through the exercise of diagramming (Charmaz, 2000), an endeavour that proved indispensable to the formation of the substantive theory. The NVivo model building tool was used throughout the research process to visually examine many of the analytical observations and to summarise the theoretical and conceptual development of the grounded theory. The memo function was used in parallel to keep a detailed account of the ongoing sampling and analytical decisions made.
4.5.3.3 Theoretical (selective) coding.

The codes identified during open and focused coding are compared during theoretical coding with the aim of identifying theoretical categories that group various elements together, identify shared properties of these elements, and expose the relationships between them. In this process the researcher searches for elements within the data that support or disprove emerging hypothetical relationships - testing these through the process of theoretical sampling. Essentially, theoretical coding involves the integration and refinement of the codes identified in the focused coding phase into a larger theoretical scheme (Glaser, 1978).

Memo-writing is emphasised within theoretical coding as a powerful tool that creates the space for reflective practice on the concepts and categories identified in the data (Lempert, 2007). The memos in turn may be treated as data, being coded and analysed through the same constant comparative method in order to generate theoretical insight into the theory under development. Glaser (1978) stressed the importance of a-priori theoretical codes in making the researcher sensitive to subtle relationship between elements and identified extant literature as a clear source of such sensitisation. In considering the interpretation of theoretical coding, the current research favoured Glaser’s (1992) later statement that every concept must earn its way into the theory rather than being directly imported from the literature.

Though consistent memo-writing it became apparent that police officers’ strategic responses were not only a response to the situational parameters but also reflected more engrained cultural and individual level factors. On re-reading the transcripts, the coding, and the associated memos uncertainty in the work place emerged as a repeatedly expressed concern. Building on the emergent data regarding uncertainty, the importance of leadership in manoeuvring through a highly uncertain occupational environment arose as the core category that accounted for the variation in the patterns of police officer decision-making. Leadership
creates variation in cultural practices and individual knowledge, dictating to a large degree police officer behaviour during dynamic situations – either directly (i.e., through command) or indirectly (e.g., mentoring). Once this basic social process was firmly established, the researcher consulted existing literature for comparisons (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 1978).

4.6 Summary

Having introduced the CGT method in Chapter Three, this chapter examined the research design and how theoretical sampling and the constant comparative method were applied to the current research. Data was collected from variously located police stations using semi-structured interviews; theory generation occurred through analytic reflection, supported by the use of NVivo and memo-writing. The next chapter focuses on the strategies implemented to establish trustworthiness of the analysis that is subsequently presented.
Validity-related issues in qualitative research have been discussed for more than half a century (Atkinson, Coffey, & Delamont, 2003; Reason & Bradbury, 2008) and continue to be disputed across several disciplines including psychology (Cassell & Symon, 2011), engineering (Borrego, Douglas, & Amelink, 2009), and health (Freshwater, Cahill, Walsh, & Muncey, 2010). Researchers wishing to take steps to enhance, assess, and document the quality of their investigation are faced with a broad range of evaluative frameworks, each with its own set of empiricoanalytical criteria. This dissertation was primarily influenced by Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) conception of naturalistic inquiry, which they later acknowledged as coinciding with constructivist grounded theory (CGT; Lincoln & Guba, 2013).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) perceived qualitative research as producing “multiple constructed realities that can be studied holistically” (p. 37). In order to reveal these realities, Lincoln and Guba argued that human participants must be the primary data collection source and the setting ought to be a natural one as actors are “wholes that cannot be understood in isolation from their contexts” (p. 39). In this context, the researcher is depicted as the primary data-gathering instrument – the principle apparatus that encapsulates, responds to, and describes the complex interactions observed. Given that the product of this type of enquiry is provisional and context-specific, positivist evaluative criteria such as validity and reliability do not carry equivalent connotations (Angen, 2000). Thus, Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) criteria of authenticity and trustworthiness, in addition to Charmaz’s (2006) principles, were applied to this research project. That is, credibility (reconceptualisation of internal validity), transferability (reconceptualisation of external validity/generalisability), dependability (reconceptualisation of reliability), and confirmability (reconceptualisation of objectivity) were considered in evaluating the trustworthiness of the outcomes of the research. Lincoln
and Guba’s conceptualisation was utilised as it is cited as the “gold standard” (Whittemore, Chase, & Mandle, 2001, p. 527) in providing practical direction for qualitative investigators.

5.1 Credibility

The canon of internal validity – ensuring that a study measures or tests what it actually set out to – constitutes an essential component of the positivist method. The qualitative equivalent, credibility, entails conscious effort in composing accurate interpretations of data (Carboni, 1995). Credibility asks the questions of ‘How congruent are the findings with reality?’ (Merriam, 1998) and ‘Does the explanation fit the description?’ (Janesick, 1994). The sections below are dedicated to detailing the provisions implemented to promote credibility of the current research.

Prolonged engagement refers to the development of an early familiarity with the culture of the participating organisation, typically commencing prior to data collection. Prolonged engagement is recommended partly to acquire sufficient observations to identify any distortions that may exist and partly to develop congenial relationships with members of the participating community. The length of time appropriate to spend in a particular context is said to be a function of the purpose of the research and the experience of the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) - evidently the literature provides very little in way of specific guidance. Anthropologists conducting fieldwork in an unfamiliar culture often report spending at least one year enmeshed in the research site (Werner & Schoepfle, 1987). This is consistent with Stewart’s (1998) proposition that prolonged fieldwork “has customarily been construed as 12 to 18 months” (p. 68). In the current project, prolonged engagement began with ongoing meetings with Victoria Police, a review of the appropriate police literature, and the development of rapport with various members of Victoria Police. The field work encompassed 11 months, enabling sufficient time for the researcher to develop a nuanced understanding of the culture, language, and views of Victoria Police members.
A second means by which credibility is enhanced during data collection is through the triangulation of sources and methods (Denzin, 2009). Triangulation is based on the premise that no single method can adequately describe the empirical reality, thus multiple methods of data collection and analysis are utilised to corroborate findings, ascertain validity, and promote a deeper understanding of the identified phenomenon (Denzin, 2009; Wilson, & Hutchinson, 1991). The former claim is deemed somewhat controversial as it assumes that the weakness of one method can be compensated for by another and presumes that opposing accounts can always be amalgamated. Rather than seeing triangulation as a method of validation, the current research utilised the technique to ensure that a rich, robust, and comprehensive account of police officer decision-making was developed.

Four kinds of triangulation contribute to the verification of qualitative analysis; (i) ascertaining the consistency of findings generated by different data collection methods, that is, methods triangulation; (ii) examining the consistency of different data sources with the same method, that is, triangulation of sources; (iii) using multiple analysts to review findings, that is analyst triangulation; and (iv) using multiple perspectives or theories to interpret the data, that is, theory triangulation. Methods triangulation occurs at the level of research design or data collection (Thurmond, 2001). Interviews, observations and reflexive journaling were utilised for triangulation of methods. Comparisons and cross-checking of the consistency of information derived at different times and by different informants was achieved through site triangulation. That is, participants located across various police service areas were interviewed to reduce the effect of local factors and to allow for the possible emergence of between-group differences.

To promote authenticity of the data, member checking – the submission of material relevant to the investigation for checking by the participants who constituted the original source of the material (Byrne, 2001) – occurred informally during interviews through the use
of clarifying techniques (e.g., “so what you’re saying is …”). Lincoln and Guba (1985) posited another kind of check, one in which findings and interpretations are shared with, and critically evaluated by, the participants during the data analysis phase (Creswell, 2007). This method was not employed as it assumes that there is a fixed reality that can be explained by the researcher and confirmed by the participant (Barbour, 2001) – directly contradicting the researcher’s constructivist ontology. Ethically, reading interview transcripts and recalling the distressing memories was assessed as likely to lead to negative emotions for the participants (Lowes & Gill, 2006) and deemed a risk that could possibly not be outweighed by the attained benefits.

Analyst triangulation – using more than one researcher at any research stage (Denzin, 1989) - was limited by resource constraints (the researcher entered the field as the sole interviewer/observer). Notwithstanding, data interpretation occurred in consultation with the research supervisors (Shenton, 2004). The meetings provided a sounding board for developing ideas and led to the incorporation of theoretical perspectives which may have otherwise been overlooked. The writer also attended monthly qualitative group meetings during the fourth year of candidature, wherein further opportunities for scrutiny of the project by colleagues and academics transpired. In addition to external scrutiny, the investigator herself sought to evaluate the project through reflective commentary (see Appendix 13).

Negative case analysis - as recommended by various commentators (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Silverman, 2000) - occurred when patterns and trends that were previously identified needed to be more thoroughly analysed by considering the instances and cases that did not fit the original formation. Continuous searching for, and discussion of these exceptions may have broadened the tenets, altered the tenets, or cast doubt on them entirely. Regardless of the outcome the process ensured that contradictory data were not dismissed rather incorporated into the theory until it accounted for the majority of cases.
For example, the researcher discovered that several participants provided contrary information to the general consensus that training had no effect on real life decision-making. Upon further investigation, these differences appeared to be associated with whether the participant was currently, or had previously worked within the capacity of an instructor. That is, direct experience with teaching the curricula contributed to a positive attitude toward the principles of training and increased the likelihood of their incorporation into day-to-day decision-making.

5.2 Transferability

Regardless of the methodology adopted, researchers are expected to address the applicability of their research results beyond the setting from which they derived (Lee & Baskerville, 2003). Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued that it is the responsibility of the investigator to ensure that sufficient contextual information about the field (i.e., thick descriptions, Geertz, 1973) is provided to the reader such that they themselves can determine how transferable the findings might be. Authors disagree on the nature and extent of background information that ought to be offered (e.g., Erlandson, 1993; Merriam, 2009). However, few disagree with the need to provide a full description of all the contextual factors impinging on the inquiry (Guba, 1981). To facilitate transferability, background information regarding the context of study is provided in the methodology chapters and Appendices (see Appendix 13) that provides both aggregate and case specific information.

5.3 Dependability and Confirmability

Paralleling the concept of reliability, dependability refers to the stability of findings over time across similar participants in a similar context. Detailed and comprehensive documentation of theoretical, methodological, and analytical decisions is required to ensure the dependability of the research findings (Koch, 2006). The researcher, thus, should make
transparent the methods by which the data were collected, recorded, and analysed (Bowen, 2009). In producing a thorough account of the current researcher, the development of several lines of inquiry and construction of concepts is presented through a log of all research activities in the field (with dates, purpose, substance and outcome noted) and a log of data analysis activity (Guba & Lincoln, 1982; see Appendix 13 for examples). To offer visible evidence of how raw data transitioned into themes, salient concepts, and findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Koch, 2006) reflexive memos amassed the inquirer’s perceptions, insights, and affective experiences to adduce that interpretations of the data were not merely “figments of the inquirer’s imagination” (Tobin & Begley, 2004, p. 392).

5.4 Summary

The current chapter has argued that regardless of one’s discipline or the method employed, validity and reliability constitute vital elements in any research endeavour. These positivist concepts remain contested in qualitative research and are indeed entirely complex questions. The writer acknowledges and concurs with LeCompte and Preissle’s (1993) imploration:

Unique situations cannot be reconstructed precisely, even the exact replication of research methods may fail to produce identical results. Qualitative research occurs in natural settings and often is undertaken to record a process of change, so replication is only approximated, never achieved … because human behaviour is never static, no study is replicated exactly, regardless of the methods and designs used (p. 332).
CHAPTER SIX: VICTORIA POLICE SOCIOLOGY

The seminal work of Westley (1970) identified the police as a “social and occupational group” (p. 8) whose monolithic and static identity exerted considerable influence over the working environment of the police organisation (Chan, 1999; Manning & Van Maanen, 1978). Policing scholars have since argued that the inherent uncertainty of police work results in the conception of an obstinate culture (Manning, 1977), manifested in a layer of informal norms and values. Contemporary scholars, however, warn against capacious assumptions – they contend that the existence of a police culture is not definite (Cochran & Bromley, 2003) and even in its presence may be poorly defined or exceedingly malleable (Chan, 1996). Existing descriptions of the police culture are discernibly a reflection of the North American context. Whether, and if so how, the concept manifests globally is scarcely scrutinised, providing a cogent rationale for the current exploration.

The current research suggests that organisational and operational aspects of policing - the rigid rank hierarchy and the impact of superior and peer relations - are crucial considerations in understanding police officer decision-making. Given this, the current chapter draws on the strengths of the utilised theory-generating method to identify the critical elements of the Victorian Police culture before considering its implications for day-to-day operational duties. Research participants across various geographical regions offered a range of views on how the police culture influenced the development and augmentation of their decision-making skills. Working within the constant comparative method (see Chapters Three and Four), officers’ descriptions of the policing context were compared and contrasted within and between interviews. The views presented hereafter are supported by illustrative interview excerpts - no claims are made as to the generalisability of these views to the broader Victoria Police populace.
6.1 Hierarchy

Manifesting as the command of dominant and superior members, coordination and authority comprised prominent structural arrangements of the Victorian Police culture. The rank hierarchy was most notably highlighted through the variously prescribed roles and powers of individual rank groups:

… our police command recognises that if you have an experienced supervisor or commander, if they make a decision to do something then we are very careful about criticising somebody who is senior and experienced like me, to criticise us from making a decision based on the circumstances at the time …

Officers commonly identified the unifying role of seniority, attributing the responsibility of social and operational coordination to senior ranks. This was said to predominantly manifest in the communication of directives and the guiding of behaviour toward a specified goal:

But I suppose that’s in some way where the rank system is beneficial because they expect to be told what to do by me, and I expect to be told what to do by my higher ranking people. It’s not a free for all, it’s a structure, a system.

In the following sections, the police occupational culture is mapped according to the two most commonly interviewed configurations of the Victoria Police structure: supervisors (i.e., Sergeants and Senior Sergeants) and Constables. Given that access to specialised units was occluded, the degree of specialisation present within the hierarchy cannot be entirely spoken to. Nevertheless, it should be noted that officers frequently acknowledged limits to their capacity and recognised the need for specialist intervention:

I knew they are trained to do it, I know they’re equipped and I know they have the, they have more fire power and better tactics and they’re better trained than we are.
6.1.1 Supervisors.

Officers in this rank segment described being actively involved in the monitoring of police officer performance and the resolution of incidents, either by attending physically or by deploying orders over the police radio. The supervisor’s powers appeared to be a direct derivative of the formal hierarchy, enabling for coordinated action and resource allocation to transpire:

… the Senior Sergeant turned up and the Inspector … some more supervisors with more rank, greater than mine, and with that they then take control …

Variation in how authority was practiced emerged as a by-product of the experience of the police officer and the individual characteristics of the supervisor. These factors interacted to produce two distinct types of influence: (i) unilateral, and (ii) reciprocal.

6.1.1.1 Unilateral command.

Unilateral command was characterised by the utilisation of hierarchy, rank, and rules in the achievement of a desired set of objectives. Supervisors functioning within this approach consistently described issuing directives through a top-down method of communication (see Figure 6):

I direct a junior member, I need you to go and do this. I need you to give that bloke a caution, and record the caution, and give him his rights, and if he wants to make phone calls and things like that. If it’s a junior member I’ve got to walk him through step by step …
The application of unilateral authority was most commonly described when experience was unequally distributed within a dyad, as in the supervisor-novice duo. Supervisors generally assumed that inexperienced officers were unable to function effectively or to generate novel ideas or knowledge in the absence of directives. Consequently, supervisors described giving detailed directions and adjusting their objectives:

… if it had been a more experienced member I probably would have done more … I didn’t want to put him in a situation that he felt uncomfortable with … If I had someone else that was more senior that I probably worked with a lot more … I’m might have gone up there.

The inexperienced officers reported abiding by the directives of the supervisor, indicating a detachment from autonomous practice and an alignment to the organisational hierarchy:

I’m relying on my partner, my more experienced partner working with me to guide me into what my reaction should be and watching them.

Incidents characterised by time constraints and a scarce margin of error appeared to benefit from the efficiency of unilateral command. When stakes were high and the situation was dynamic, supervisors noted that the actions of the inexperienced officer could have had especially detrimental outcomes. The pertinent concern was that the officer would either
adopt the “superman” persona or otherwise “freeze” in response to a perceived threat. Supervisors identified either reaction as inappropriate and exercised authority to ensure that neither eventuated:

… it’s the stress, they’re quick to use other tools you know what I mean?

I don’t know how they would react that’s the thing, would they have frozen? Maybe. Would they have chased the crook or stood there and scratched their head?

### 6.1.1.2 Reciprocal command.

In contrast to unilateral command, supervisors who described functioning within reciprocal command commonly stressed the importance of participative communication, dispensing with strict rules of hierarchy and promoting vertical information flow:

I said I’m not happy, we need to check this house, I’m not happy with this and I said are you guys OK with coming in? … there’s consultation going on as well. Even though I’m the Sergeant, if the three Senior Constables all said to me [name deleted] - we’re not really happy with this, we don’t really want to do it we’d rather just wait - then I’d sort of think about that and think OK.

Reciprocal command typically transpired between a supervisor and one or more experienced officers. Officers’ with a considerable level of experience were perceived by supervisors as an indispensable aid as well as a limitation on their discretionary power. Supervisors reported being reliant on the experienced officers’ willingness to carry out specified orders. In order to achieve equilibrium, supervisors sought to establish a collaborative partnership by recognising the value of the officers’ input and active participation in the decision-making process (see Figure 7):
I’ll say well what do you think and they’ll say this, this, and this and I’ll go - didn’t think of that, that’s a good idea lets go with that!

Figure 7. Reciprocal police command.

Supervisors functioning within reciprocal command also described imparting substantial resources into the provision of social support, advocating strongly for the welfare of their personnel:

I run through the members - if you need help I’m here, there is counselling, there is welfare, if you’re worried about that go outside - go and see your own doctor, do whatever you need to get a handle on things, don’t bottle it up …

A host of individual factors appeared to inform how each supervisor determined the best means by which to tend to the welfare needs of his or her constituencies. Thus, strategies varied greatly - ranging from correction of behaviour to sophisticated methods of monitoring mental health:

… we’ve got now here basically a wellbeing register that we keep here, and it’s basically, so we are on the system … supervisors and Sergeants got access to it so if there’s an incident we put the details on there so we can know and keep an eye out on the members and we know what they’ve been involved in.
Overall, supervisors predominantly described functioning within one of the above-identified interactional styles. Although variation in supervisory practices between officers was noted, there was little discussion to suggest that individual supervisors employed flexibility in their approach. That is, supervisors appeared to adhere to one type of supervisory style with little demonstrated variation in response to situational and/or relational circumstances.

Contingency theorists have long argued that successful leadership requires adaptation to the needs of the supervisee (Avery, 2001; Hoy & Miskel, 2005; Waugh & Streib, 2006). Supervisory style must not only change from person to person, but also, in reaction to the assigned task. In assigning each task, the supervisor must choose whether to direct, coach, delegate or support the officer. As the officer becomes more able to operate independently, the supervisor must once again adapt his or her style to foster their emerging autonomy. The most effective supervisory style may thus be one that fits the task, the supervisor-subordinate dyad, the context, the situation, as well as the individual officer. Ultimately, one supervisor may embody both a unilateral and reciprocal command style: adopting either one in reaction to the immediate environmental and situational dynamics.

6.1.2 Officers.

With a strong focus on performance, accountability, and cost-containment amidst structural, procedural, and cultural complexities, it is not surprising that officers described functioning under a high level of job stress. A collegial alliance appeared to emerge over time, fostering a sense of dependability and safety amidst a tumultuous and ever-threatening environment:

I probably usually, I talk to my partner or colleagues you know if you end up tuning up to a traumatic event you’ve got them to sort of back you up there.
… to know that your partner has been taught the same as you so therefore you would expect or anticipate that their response is similar - or you would arrive … you’d be making the same assessments and considerations at the same … at that time as well so you, so you’re on the same page I suppose to a degree to the person you’re working with.

Early in their career, officers described depending immensely on hierarchical control in manoeuvring the complex social and operational milieu of the police organisation. Without the anchoring of hierarchy, the officers noted that they would have been functioning blindly in the day-to-day process of decision-making. As experience accumulated, however, officers noted a corresponding shift in allegiance. They described diverting away from reliance on supervisors and toward the collegial community – relying on fellow officers to “have my back”:

And support from your colleagues is what I found you know only as much as 2 years ago had I not gotten support that I got I wouldn’t be here now, I wouldn’t be in this office now because I just would have felt you know and how do I get out of this, just move on and start again.

… that’s part of what we do as coppers, we have to do that … we will get out of this, and you’re coming too, build that confidence up and you get through it.

The importance of collegial affiliation was most prominently illustrated when officers reported receiving little support from their fellow officers. This was often experienced as an exceptionally distressing event, having subsequent negative effects on the officer’s emotional and social well-being:
It would have assisted me greatly to have had some support from people I’d worked with for 5-6 years, but whether that was an instruction from whoever at the office, don’t contact him or whatever I don’t know. It got to me, it added to what I was already going through and just the thought, well someone might have dropped around to see me.

This concept of solidarity did not appear to permeate rank or social category. Detectives and Constables, for example, although principally of the same social category (i.e., the police) expressed reservation in seeking out each other’s counsel and protection. The vertical and horizontal divide imposed by the hierarchy was rarely contravened and pointed to a pervasive lack of inter-rank communication. Likewise, non-police (e.g., family members) were rarely identified as a social support. Over time, officers described ceasing to expect non-police persons to understand the danger and unpredictability of their occupational environment:

I don’t get into talking much with family about what’s going on but yeah I kind of keep work here and separate, don’t really talk about it and my wife doesn’t want to know anything about it so.

I found that I felt I was just talking to somebody that was giving me excuses, they don’t work in the field, they don’t understand … I just thought they’re not making me feel better about anything, whether they could’ve I don’t know. If I was to sit down with a colleague they’d go - oh yeah I know and they’d sympathise and empathise.

Officers described a sense of belonging and cohesion that developed as part of rank membership. It appeared to derive from both common experiences encountered in the field and through the inherent social learning process that diverted officers away from the organisational hierarchy toward the collegial community. Belonging was most commonly seen as the consequence of a need for insulation from the omnipresent threat of danger that
could not be identified in advance. Officers indicated that over time they had come to believe that the only people who could be counted on in problematic situations were not their supervisors or the organisation but other officers:

… they keep going on about police numbers, as far as you know some police stations are short staffed, most police stations are short staffed but if Vic Pol just changed a few policies and procedures that would take a lot of pressure and stress off the frontline and it will actually help us but they don’t do those things. We just feel like we’re banging our heads against the wall, that’s what I feel like anyways.

6.2 Leadership

Internal relationships, dynamics, and traditions within the workplace were described as highly influential in shaping the outcomes of the police station and its members. The supervisor’s leadership qualities played a key role in providing direction regarding standards and expectations of practice as well as dictating the culture, values, beliefs, and aspirations of the workplace. Interpersonal relationships formed critical determinants of the trajectory of officers’ development, with many officers reporting that the most fundamental role of police supervisors related to the establishment of a work environment that enabled them to perform their duties to the best of their abilities.

Many of the officers interviewed noted that police supervisors needed to continually and consistently focus on people and the nurturing of relationships. Policies, procedures and protocols were described as being fundamental to the organisation, however the materialisation of efficient processes and operations was said to rely most heavily on supervisors promoting relationships:

It would probably be your local peer support officer who’s a copper and where we are our support bloke is good. But in your bigger stations you just get lost in the mix, like
in [location deleted] so much going on, like they’re more interested in that your paper is up to date than how you’re travelling. So something like that would be handy or just even for the bosses to get around a bit more and yeah like, they do it for their own agenda and they’re all trying to get up the ladder so they don’t really care.

… you know I offer my ear I say they can say to me anything they like. Very few members come back to me that don’t know me … I know the members here. What I will have is members from here come to me after they’ve been at incidents controlled by other Sergeants and run through things there, that’s a personal thing I know them on a personal level.

In promoting relationships, officers identified effective communication as a key quality of strong leadership. Discussions regarding planning action, testing knowledge, and debriefing following an incident were all noted as effective platforms for the transference of tangible and esoteric qualities from the supervisor to the officer:

… debrief the members after the training, after the scene has been cleared and I run through what they did well and I explain why I did things and why I directed them to do things that weren’t being done - because unless they’re told why they got told to go and do something they have no idea why they’ve done it and that’s something that we as an organisation have not done well for a number of years, we’re getting better at it now …

… simple craft is being lost because it’s just not being passed on because senior members are going out …

As agents of leadership, supervisors were perceived as being in a powerful position to provide social support and to alleviate strain. In order for supervisor support to be of benefit,
however, the supervisor needed to dispense with rigid rules and adherence to the hierarchical structure. The abatement of power dynamics was said to foster open communication and afforded the opportunity for officers to express vulnerability and engage in genuine self-reflection:

Sometimes people have issues that have never gone away so yeah. And it’s almost like it’s expected, it’s your job. I don’t, I agree that’s what we do. In saying that I will carry and support you all the way through. No begrudging it, that part of the conversation is not in their head it just stops at you’re supposed to do it.

… that’s where it’s so good in the debrief afterwards in big scenarios that you can talk it over with your peers and your senior members, how did I go in that situation and get that feedback.

The importance of knowledge, genuineness, and patience in leadership was distinctly highlighted when officers described functioning under a supervisor that they perceived as ineffective:

They don’t coach properly, don’t teach the right things, they’re not genuine about it or they just have, they just have preconceived ideas or a chip on the shoulder and it can really reflect on the junior members.

The importance of adequate supervisory support identified by the interviewed officers is corroborated by existing evidence, which indicates that effective police leadership comprises dimensions of ethical practice (e.g., Vito, Suresh, & Richards, 2011), role modelling (e.g., Densten, 2003), communication (e.g., Brough & Frame, 2004; Butterfield, Edwards, & Woodall, 2005), critical thinking (e.g., Meaklim & Sims, 2011), decision-making (e.g., Densten, 2003; Hoque, Arends, & Alexander, 2004), trustworthiness (Wheatcroft,
Alison, & McGrory, 2012), and legitimacy (Duncan, Mouly, & Nilakant, 2001). Police supervisors play a central role in unifying the social and operational mechanisms of the police – they are expected to facilitate the knowledge and skill development of subordinate officers, to provide adequate social support, and to instil values in the work environment. For this reason Victoria Police culture did not present as a monolith - it was not expressed equally across all stations. Admittedly, all police stations shared comparable structures, equipment, and practices espoused by Victoria Police as tools for achieving its mandates. Nonetheless, local police station culture appeared to vary as a result of the expectations entrenched by police supervisors:

… the experience that you get is really dependent on the stations that you go to, and the attitude of the senior members that you have worked with when you’re at those stations.

Patterns of economic and social mobility appeared to introduce even larger-scale variation, such that the geographical location of the police station had a significant impact upon the visions, priorities, and values promulgated by police supervisors and the means by which officers fulfilled their roles and responsibilities:

I suppose entwine yourself in the community so that you know more people and things and they then know you and get a better understanding of you that it’s not just this bloke in a blue shirt they are human, yeah. It’s a two way street you get that from them and they get a better understanding of us.

6.3 Geographical Variation

Victoria has a land area of over 227 thousand square kilometres yet over 75% of its 5 million residents reside within the Melbourne metropolitan area (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011). The remaining population is scattered across vast rural regions, each of
which are subdivided into police service areas (PSAs) or local area commands. Each PSA has a number of police stations, with some rural stations staffed by only one officer (Adcock, 2002) and some small rural villages being serviced by officers located in neighbouring towns (Jobes, Donnermeyer, Barclay, & Weinand, 2000). Throughout the iterative process of data collection and analysis it became evident that the material conditions of policing in geographically remote and isolated communities influenced how policing practices were carried out. Remoteness is defined here as per the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA) classification developed by the Department of Health and Aged Care (1997). The ARIA methodology stipulates that rural and urban areas are defined by accessibility to goods and services; with metropolitan areas having high access and remote areas having very restricted access. As per this definition, the following sections outline the unique challenges and practices present across rural PSAs and how these differed in comparison to the challenges and practices characteristic of urban PSAs.

6.3.1 Rural PSAs.

The effects of geography alone posed a serious problem for rural police officers, having an impact on response time or the speed in which support services could be provided. With only a few police officers covering large areas of land, all decisions could potentially have had serious implications on the availability of police resources. For example, an arrest could take the arresting officer a number of hours to process:

So now I’ve got a dilemma, I’ve got him and I’ve only got three hours from the time of the accident to get him back for a breath test, to breathalyse him, and I’m the only one who’s got one within two to two and a half hours’ drive. I’m the only one who’s got a breathalyser and I’m already an hour into the accident at around 7pm. So what
do I do, I can’t … I’m the only copper there. I can’t leave the ambulance girls alone with all these drunken idiots, who is going to look after them?

Many of the work pressures identified by rural police officers were associated with the geographical distance from police backup and other relevant emergency and social services. The need to maximise scarce resources meant that officers needed to be able to deal with “anything and everything”:

I’m trying to deal with the scene, crime scene, deal with the injured people, protect the ambos [ambulance officers], find this crook - and that was almost a 24 hour job that!

Admittedly, precisely analysing and describing the intricacies of any localised culture is an extremely challenging research endeavour. This is particularly so given the limited time the researcher spent at each police station (i.e., one working day). Nevertheless, several key features did arise as distinguishing rural from urban police culture. A key difference pertained to the regular use of informal means of social control (e.g., engaging the family, utilising the community as a resource) by rural officers in the resolution of incidents. This appeared to be founded on a strong relationship between the police and the local community:

In the country you work a lot by yourself, your backup is a long way away and a lot of the time you know the people you’re going out to see because you see those people in shopping centres so if you’re going to punch them up … if you’re not going to treat them with respect, it’s going to come back and bite you in the ass … the other day I went to arrest a guy with a warrant, knocked on the door, ended up having breakfast together because he was cooking his breakfast. you know what I mean?
Informal control was facilitated by the fact that many officers operating in rural PSAs knew the local residents outside of their formal working environment. As such, officers reported knowing quite a lot about the people that they served:

I think they’re [rural stations] more involved in the community and certainly happens to an extent in [location deleted] … smaller country towns, you know, they’re often involved in some other way in the community whether it be the football club or even just doing the shopping so see people all the time.

So when I bought him in here he recognised me and goes - alright this guy is alright - and he treated me a bit nicer and he was probably a bit more cooperative in investigation and possibly led to admission and what not … Might not be so negative towards me and that in turn - you deal with the parents and dealing with the parents, if they see you’re being good with their kids or what not that builds a good rapport again. We don’t hate police in general you know they’re not all bad give them a go.

Although the community was commonly described as a significant resource and an indispensable network of information gathering and dissemination, officers emphasised that community respect needed to be established if the police-community relationship was to be effective. This was often done by affirming oneself as a trustworthy individual:

You can’t be pie in the sky and especially sort of a local copper. You’re judged on your performance and you only get one shot at it, it’s about trust, reliability, and they’ll bring it up at and so - and a lot of the trust that’s where the problem is with policing, and if you can get it right and help them out then become the go to …

Officers working in rural PSAs reported that trust was predominantly founded on principles of transparency and integrity:
It would have taken a good half hour explaining, reassuring, monitoring and just sort of keep detailing the process of what we’re going to go through and the benefits at the end.

The need to keep promises and provide feedback was also described as quintessential:

You can say, you know, I’ve been here before, you’ve talked to me before, we’ve gotten on well you know … I’ve told you exactly what would happen, I didn’t lie to you.

You just work through it later on when they’ve calmed down say - we’ve had to act this way because you acted up like that.

Given the close social ties between the police and the community, rurally-based police officers often reported implementing policing styles that were deemed more responsive to community needs. This in part appeared to be due to the high visibility of police decisions:

… so everybody knows everybody, you can’t just be a ruthless copper that wants to get an end result, you’ve got to work with them.

The concept of visibility permeated the roles of both the police officer and the local resident, such that rurally-based officers experienced heightened accountability and responsibility even in their capacity as a community member:

… sometimes you’ve dealt with the person before and some of us live locally so you might deal with them when you’re working and the next day you might see them at the shopping centre and that might have an impact.

The less formal nature of rural life and the small size of many rural stations made complex bureaucratic procedures less necessary for day-to-day operations. Supervisors
functioning in rural PSAs generally promoted a reliance on police-community relations and endorsed trust and integrity as foundational values. Supervisors reported that if a strong bond with the community was established, the local residents could act as an informal network that diffused crime and provided a far-reaching source of information when a crime did occur. They reported that the rural police were “one with the community” and that policing without the involvement and support of the locals would likely lead to unsuccessful outcomes. Such a supervisory style may be said to be akin to Wilson’s (1968) service style, with a clear preference for informal resolution methods as a means of upholding community-oriented policing principles.

Studies of rural policing are rare (Falcone et al., 2002; Garkovich, 1991; Mawby, 2004) and of those conducted many have focussed on identifying generic crimes committed in rural contexts (e.g., Payne, Berg, & Sun, 2005; Smith, 2004; Yarwood, 2001; Yarwood & Gardner, 2000), with little known about the styles of policing adopted by rural police officers. In the current research, officers operating in rural PSAs contended with a unique set of complexities including few resources, low budgets, and limited equipment. The issues that arose as a result of geographical remoteness appeared to create a unique rural policing style, one that relied heavily on the ability to form effective police-community relations. This finding prompted the query of whether rurally-based policing was the equivalent of community-oriented policing.

6.3.1.1 Is rural policing the equivalent of community-oriented policing?

There appears to be an implicit assumption in the literature that rural policing equates most closely with the ideal: the police live within their working environment and form a part of the local community, making cooperation between the policing enterprise and the citizenry a likely feat (e.g., Thurman & McGarrell, 1997). This has been argued to be particularly true in Australia, where rural PSAs cover vast land mass (Jobes, 2002). The literature considering
community policing in rural areas has produced conflicting results, suggesting either that rural areas are highly amenable to community-oriented policing (COP; Falcone et al., 2002) or that they endorse the traditional, professionalism-based style of policing (Crank, 1990; Zhao, Lovrich, & Robinson, 2001).

Specifically, COP is defined as both a philosophical and an organisational strategy (Trojanowicz & Bucqueroux, 1994) subsisting of four archetypal dimensions: (i) the philosophical: the ideas, beliefs, attitudes, and values that epitomise the proposition, (ii) the strategic: the operational concepts that translate its philosophical credence into policies, priorities, and resources, (iii) the tactical: the concrete programs, tactics, and behaviours implemented, and (iv) the organisational: the changes in police organisational structure, management, and information systems needed to facilitate COP initiatives. Thus, COP is not simply a matter of improving relationships between the police and the community – it is a problem-solving approach that draws upon the community’s expertise in identifying and understanding social issues that contribute to crime, disorder, and fear (Trojanowicz & Bucqueroux, 1994). Although some rural practices could be perceived as functioning under the auspices of COP (e.g., the focus on police-community relationships), rurally-based officers interviewed for the current research did not appear to be ascribing wholly to COP initiatives.

In terms of the philosophical underpinnings, the rural police stations demonstrated general adherence to the various principles and goals of COP. Specifically, supervisors endorsed principles of community-building, trust, and cooperation and endeavoured to increase community satisfaction with the police. However, upon further inspection these principles and goals were permeated by police-driven incentives rather than embodying democratic, citizen participation initiatives. The consultation that the rural officers were participating in was, in fact, more selective and ad hoc. Relationships with community
members were strategic, such that they enabled for access to information and protection from criticism:

… probably 90% of people that you’re dealing with are locals, and so yeah you get rapport with them - sometimes they are the people that you rely on to help you with things, might be witnessed something or heard something or been a victim. So if you build rapport over time it can be better for you later on for investigation stuff and that.

… if you’ve treated them like an ass, then you’ll have a huge job trying to converse with them this time.

Additionally, rurally-based officers reported that no official COP programs were introduced to change or improve upon the delivery of police services. Given this, it would be misleading to conclude that in Victoria, rural-based policing is the equivalent of COP. Although the philosophical underpinnings are shared, a number of other characteristics of COP are absent. Essentially, then, the rurally-based officers’ well-developed skills in relationship building appeared to be the result of the conditions in which they operated. That is, strong police-community relations served as a mechanism through which officers could implement policing objectives.

6.3.2 Urban PSAs.

Resource availability was of much less concern to officers operating in urban PSAs who predominantly described policing efforts as comprising of a large number of police personnel. Back up was reported to be typically minutes away and specialist and external services could readily be called upon to facilitate complex resolution strategies. With such resources at their disposal, urban-based officers described having to make few efforts in establishing strong relationships with the community:
Doing that in town that same person starts arcking up [getting angry] and he’s 6’4 and starts arcking up and starts pushing towards to me. I will straight away go to spray out and I’m going to back off I’m going to move down, I’m going to come up on the air I won’t let him get away with this when I’ve got stuff to deal with.

Yeah it’s … not rural so the only people we get to know are our regulars and they’re fairly unpredictable with drug use and stuff. I mean you get probably 5-6 that you know well, you get to know. So it’s not like you know everyone.

In line with this, urban officers commonly reported that they felt they were not respected by community members:

… from my point of view it’s a lot more busy in the city, in the city everyone is go, go, go, go, got to do this and that. So more time based and they don’t want to talk to you and you obviously, if they commit an offence you try and talk to them. They have, some of them have no respect at all they just - I’ve got to go!

Officers who had experience working across both rural and urban PSAs reported that when they were working in urban (as opposed to rural) settings they were less likely to rely on communication as a fundamental intervention strategy:

I think we jump too far into it rather than going and - because they just cordon off the house, stand at the front, wait for other units to arrive. I don’t see, and this is just me, I think sometimes we need to have a go and stand just around the corner of the house, knock on the window and go – [name deleted] it’s the police, can you come out and talk to us? And if he says no get fucked, well then we’ll come back and do it their way.
Consequently, when working in urban PSAs these officers reported utilising backup, equipment, and physical restraint more frequently:

If you’ve got somebody causing issues like that and there’s backup available, otherwise you would try and talk him down.

… spray him before you do anything else don’t go hands on just spray straight away and let him settle.

I was the only one that had my option out - that capsicum spray. I was the only one that had it out, it was something instinctive. I foamed her, she dropped to the ground.

Overall, rural and urban policing contexts appeared to be derivatives of cultural differences spanning social, economic, and geographical dimensions. It is likely that the large differences in infrastructure across rural and urban police stations accounted for some of this variation. The urban police stations visited during the current research consisted of several building levels and expansive office space. Most rural stations, by comparison, were modestly sized. It is possible that such structural differences may have contributed to urban-based officers being more sensitive to dynamics of the internal police organisation and rurally-based officers being more familiar and responsive to the needs of the local community, a finding echoed by previous literature (Crank & Wells, 1991; Schafer, 2009; Schafer et al., 2009).

It is also possible that these differences in police culture are the product of supervisory-styles. Rurally-based supervisors appeared to strongly promote police-community relations; those operating in urban PSAs rarely identified police-community relations as fundamental to policing performance. Previous research (see Chapter Two) has suggested that supervisors have little effect on subordinate behaviour and are generally reluctant to engage in monitoring or close supervision (Allen, 1982; Allen & Maxfield, 1983;
Brown, 1988; Mastrofski et al., 1994). In contrast, the current research contends that supervisors are generally engaged in subordinate performance and development. Although involved, some supervisors are not necessarily effective in delivering strong leadership rather rely on the police hierarchy to coordinate action and allocate resources.

Officers reported a desire to know that they are cared for and valued. They attested to needing a space within which they could engage in reflection and evaluation of their performance, either overall or in a specific domain. Officers indicated that supervisors who offered them this opportunity created a space wherein learning was structured and regular. In contrast, the lack of such opportunities appeared to contribute to a sense of isolation and may have impeded upon knowledge and skill development. Multiple opportunities for the subordinate to be given quality feedback by the supervisor are needed. In order for this to materialise, the supervisor must invest time in direct contact with officers and invite dialogical reflection (Brewer et al., 1994).

In discussing police leadership, officers identified the importance of opportunities to “debrief” with their supervisor and/or their peers following an encounter they perceived as ambiguous. The next questions that arose were thus (i) what constitutes situational ambiguity, and (ii) what role do police supervisors play in such situations. The following chapter presents the situational determinants of police officer decision-making and constructs the environmental context within which police leadership plays out.
CHAPTER SEVEN: SITUATIONAL AMBIGUITY

Police-related incidents are high risk, high stake and uncertain events that require the ability to accurately conceptualise and respond to threat. Uncertainty in police work can be understood as a property of any situation which, due to its ambiguity or the difficulty in anticipating an outcome, constitutes a hindrance to the expediential and safe conclusion or resolution of an incident. Such uncertainty was, at least in part, identified by the interviewed officers as the product of environmental characteristics. The role of other actors, elements of the police partnership, and various suspect characteristics interacted to create a state of ambivalence.

As the officers interacted with, and attempted to control the public, the suspect and the environment, several hazards arose. Estimating and resolving risk was described as the pinnacle of complex cognitive processing: determining an action was regulated by how officers perceived, interpreted, and evaluated various situational elements. Hence, in order to understand police officer decision-making in the face of uncertainty, it was critical to delineate and describe the internal (i.e., the decision-maker’s cognitive processes) and external (i.e., the situation) factors that constituted the concept from the perspective of the interviewed officers.

This chapter maps out the contours of the situation, identifying the presence of third parties, the nature of the police partnership, and various suspect characteristics as elements that introduced ambiguity into police-suspect encounters. The chapter that follows focuses on the internal factors that created variation in how different officers arrived at different decision outcomes amidst similarly ambiguous circumstances.
7.1 Third Parties

Given that police decisions generally occurred in the presence of an evaluative audience, performing less adequately than expected under the gaze of others was a fear expressed even by the most experienced police officers. The extent to which the presence of third parties impacted upon the assessment of the situation and the decision choice implemented was explored. Focus was given to ambulance personnel and public bystanders as these parties were identified as most commonly impacting upon officer decisions.

7.1.1 Ambulance personnel.

Ambulance members were described as “highly vulnerable” and in need of “protection”. Officers indicated a tendency for this vigilance to manifest in hovering over or remaining in close proximity to the attending ambulance member:

… my real concern was for the ambulance officers there … I knew all this just by going back and forth and listening and talking to one of them.

Officers acknowledged that ambulance personnel operated under the same strenuous conditions as they themselves:

… we had so many people in the area that I could not move, and the ambos [ambulance officers] were still working on the victim at this stage … everything’s happening right here you can’t move bodies and ambos.

Consequently, officers reported a sense of obligation and duty to protect ambulance members:

… you’ve got to watch the backs of the ambos while these drunken idiots are around them while they’re trying to look after these seriously injured people.
As indicated in Figure 8, in the absence of ambulance members, officers perceived their role as centring upon the need to provide care to any injured party. Policing tasks, such as the

Figure 8. Emergency service collaboration and responsibility.
closing off of the area, identifying the suspect, and conducting the criminal investigation were adjourned until ambulance members arrived at the scene. Once in attendance, ambulance personnel were judged to have specialist knowledge and skill in tending to the physical needs of the victim/s, thus responsibility for the injured party was delegated:

… we can start to conduct the investigation because we know that the people involved are being taken care of by the other emergency services.

If the suspect was present, or was believed to be in close vicinity to the crime scene, many officers reported a sense of responsibility for the safety of the ambulance personnel:

… you’ve got an offender for what we believe to be at the time a murder. There’s also, they’ve got a deceased there that we’ve got to also look over or oversee. There’s also ambulance personnel there … so it’s a different stress for them so we’re also aware of them.

Generally, the two services appeared to operate in parallel. Members of each organisation worked side by side yet each was coordinated internally by their own superiors. This is consistent with existing literature which, although scarce, suggests that each emergency service provider is focused on its own task agenda (Berlin & Carlstrom, 2011; Boin, 2005). A mismatch of resources, skills, culture, processes, expectations, professional identity, and competing demands across the organisational structures may serve as an axiomatic obstacle to collaboration. Consequently, information was rarely shared and there was limited discussion of how resources should be coordinated. Further examination of the nature in which the three emergency services (i.e., police, ambulance, and fire brigade) operate is needed to identify whether emergency management can be made more conducive to inter-organisational communication and collaboration.
7.1.2 Public bystanders.

The presence of bystanders - unknown civilians, family members, friends, and companions – was commonly described as adding another layer of situational ambiguity. Officers reported firstly assessing whether or not the bystander was at risk of physical harm. If so, officers then described identifying the source of the risk and implementing strategies that would manage the threat effectively:

I’m really uncomfortable with not having checked this house … I was particularly concerned because we did have so many witnesses there and people in the street. You got to understand, there’s probably 50 or 60 people at least standing around.

If bystanders were perceived to be at a safe enough distance to preclude them from physical harm their presence was described as having a minimal impact upon the decision-making process:

… you’ve got to look at where they are [public bystanders] in relation to what you want to do … they were a fair way away.

In some cases, public bystanders – most commonly a family member - provided solicited or unsolicited information or support to the police. For example, one officer discussed an incident wherein the mother of the suspect was presenting as “agro [aggressive]” and “fired up”. The presence of the suspect’s father was said to facilitate the diffusion of the highly emotive scenario as he “calmed his wife down”, which allowed the officer to exit a potentially hostile environment:

… we’re in a hallway so it wasn’t ideal … I just wanted to get out into space … the husband was like stop, stop to her.
Public bystanders did not always provide assistance, indeed their behaviour was most commonly described as an inconvenience:

… there were also neighbours there that were trying to help the firies [fire fighters] … how much are they helping … they obviously don’t have the right gear so I need to keep them safe as well.

Officers that described being uncertain as to the identity of the suspect, treated public bystanders as potential perpetrators or accomplices:

… general public witnesses and I suppose you’re thinking are these the offenders? Are they involved?

The presence of public bystanders clearly introduced a further component of uncertainty into an already dynamic and rapidly-unfolding situation. Onlookers were at times said to be of some benefit to the police, particularly in sourcing information. Generally, however, the public bystander was perceived as an unwelcomed complexity - a hindrance that needed attending to prior to the implementation of any decision:

Kind of annoys you a little bit, especially in the residential street everyone - I don’t know what it is about the presence of police cars, how people rubber neck when there’s a - everyone wants to come out and have a look. We know there’s a gun, they don’t. It’s like it doesn’t matter how many times you yell at people - can you please go back inside - why what’s … there’s a person with a gun just go inside we’ll come and see you later. People have this thing I want to know now, it’s like we don’t have time for this game get inside. And the amount of people that bring their kids out, it kills me. I just go, really?
The effect of the presence of public bystanders on police officer decision-making has only recently been investigated, with a particular focus on whether it influences the decision to utilise coercive power (e.g., Garner, Maxwell, & Heraux, 2002; Paoline & Terrill, 2007; Schuck, 2004; Terrill, 2005; Terrill & Mastrofski, 2002; Terrill, Leinfelt, & Kwak, 2008). The findings are equivocal, suggesting that the presence of public bystanders is most akin to a two-edged sword: inducing a sense of needing to demonstrate control whilst inhibiting coercive action to prevent public criticism. The issue of force in the presence of public bystanders was rarely discussed by officers in the current research. Rather public bystanders were most commonly experienced as a hindrance – gearing the decision-making process away from incident resolution to assurance of public safety.

7.2 Police Partnerships

The centrality of trust in partnerships is evidenced across various disciplines (e.g., Connell, Ferres, & Travaglione, 2003; Tyler, 2003), where it is predominantly conceptualised as a complex concept comprising both formal and informal social networks. In the current research, trust was pervasively described as requiring both partners to submit themselves to some level of risk - recognising and accepting the possibility that harmful consequences may arise from the actions of the other:

… if I had been working with a different person on that day I wouldn’t have necessarily taken that approach, it’s just that I had confidence in her and her abilities that meant that we were both happy to…

A key determinant of trust appeared to be the partner’s level of experience. Many officers made the assumption that if the partner they were working with had several years of policing experience that he or she would instinctively produce competent decisions:
It depends on the person you’re working with as well. I knew that I could rely on him to do what he had to do and I could do what I had to do. If you had someone that wasn’t experienced … you’ve got to let them know your thought process and what’s required.

… if it’s a senior member I can say - give him his caution rights - and know that that member’s going to go there and say - no you can’t call this person because it could impact the case.

Experience appeared to form a fundamental consideration in the officers’ determination of whether their partner could be trusted, and if so, to what extent. That is, officers reported entrusting an inexperienced partner with very few tasks whilst they indicated a tendency to eagerly delegate or collaboratively undertake many tasks with an experienced partner. Trust was further strengthened when a sense of predictability was present – that is, when the officer reported having previous, positive experiences of working with the same partner. Prior experience appeared to enable for the establishment of a set of expectations regarding the capabilities of the partner. Prior instances wherein the partner was perceived as making satisfactory decisions contributed to the assumption that the partner would also respond to the current situation competently:

We’ve been working together for a long … I always had his respect, he had my respect we already done jobs together, alright … I knew he was able to handle himself. I knew he was a good copper, and he’s good at catching crooks - he’s very passionate like meself [myself].

Predictability required a high level of familiarity with the partner and appeared to be founded on a subjective appraisal of the partner’s characteristics, personal qualities, and motives:
I wanted to make sure when I take a team in for something like that I know who they are and I can trust them - so they show a high level of discipline and they’re basically not going to pull the trigger.

In their reflections of what contributes to effectiveness in partnerships, officers identified communication as the second most vital element, after trust. Shared goals, a common purpose, and communication were identified as critical in maintaining focus:

… we both worked together quite a bit, we both know how we think so we both talked to each other about what’s happening …

Both trust and communication in partnerships were described as essential to effective police work, harbouring joint commitment in the pursuit of shared objectives. This is largely consistent with the existing inter-disciplinary research indicating that trust acts as a precursor for team effectiveness (Costa, 2003), innovativeness (Ellonen, Blomqvist, & Puumalainen, 2008), communication (Thomas, Zolin, & Hartman, 2009), co-operation (Tschannen-Moran, 2001), and social capital (Putnam, 1995). However, the effect of the hierarchical structure of the police force on the development of effective partnerships within individual dyads, and the organisation more broadly, is currently unknown. The hierarchical predisposition has produced differential status within the police rank and possibly impeded upon the proliferation of trust. A thorough review of the inter-disciplinary literature (e.g., Dirks & Ferrin, 2001; Perrone, Zaheer, & McEvily, 2003) is needed to ascertain whether current principles of organisational trust can be applied to the policing sector.

7.3 Suspect Characteristics

Suspect characteristics are frequently examined by studies exploring police officer decision-making (e.g., Alpert et al., 2007; Engel & Silver, 2001; Smith et al., 2006; Swatt, 2002), acknowledging that police behaviour is the result of a complex interaction between the
characteristics of the parties involved as well as the situation within which officers find themselves. Suspect demographics (i.e., race, gender, and age) are common foci. However, the effect of suspect demeanour, social class, and intoxication during the police-suspect encounter have become of interest in more contemporary inquiries (e.g., Engel, 2000). Participants in the current research described a number of suspect characteristics as contributing to the perception of an incident as ambiguous: including suspect demeanour, drug intoxication, and mental illness. Officers’ strategic response during these encounters appeared to be strongly influenced by the actions, comments, and demeanour of the suspect.

7.3.1 Demeanour.

The nature of interactions between police officers and suspects ranged from being civil to involving the use of coercive powers. Encounters that were characterised by some form of conflict were described by officers as typically involving suspects that presented with either an ambivalent or hostile demeanour.

7.3.1.1 The ambivalent suspect.

Suspects presenting as ambivalent about police involvement were described as labile in their attitude toward the police, with elements of aggressiveness and noncompliance interspersed with a willingness to engage with the police. Fundamentally, however, officers commonly assessed suspects presenting with an ambivalent demeanour as not posing an imminent threat to the welfare of the police or any other party:

… he wasn’t a threat to me … was more verbally abusive towards us, the language you know.
The establishment of rapport appeared to play a key role in the strategic option ultimately implemented. Suspects who were willing to engage with the officer to some degree were most commonly deescalated through the use of communication:

Well that’s why I say you pick your mark, you know, just from their attitude. If it starts up here well then you want it down here. Alright so you’ve got to bring it down, so you talk to him that way.

I just let them talk nonsense, you know, so they settle … talk to the guy, listen mate nothing wrong that we’re here [inaudible word] obviously we’ll go and I’ll just - you know let them have their rant but as soon as you’re told to calm down and stuff like that that’s all fine.

If communication proved inadequate, officers described disengaging from the situation by creating physical distance and calling for back up:

I managed to calm him down, I decided he was quite aggressive towards me it was better to let the backup talk to him.

7.3.1.2 The hostile suspect.

In contrast to the ambivalent suspect, hostile suspects were described as being opposed to police involvement: commonly making explicit threats directed toward the police. Their demeanour was frequently described as “volatile” and “aggressive”, particularly so if they were in possession of a weapon - or an object that could be utilised as a weapon. Prior violence (i.e., interpersonal violence, property damage) during a disparate period of the same encounter weighed heavily in the officer’s assessment of the suspect as hostile:

… before this he was aggressive towards the police and had to be talked down.
… he’d just been to his ex-girlfriend’s place and smashed it up so clearly he was pretty agitated.

Strategies requiring the use of police equipment and physical tactics were infrequent: almost exclusively occurring during an interaction with a hostile suspect. Interestingly, officers commonly noted insufficient distance between the suspect and the officer (e.g., in the police vehicle) as a proximal antecedent to the use of coercive force. Amidst a volatile situation, limited distance may act as the ‘final straw’ and signal the need to utilise police equipment (e.g., capsicum spray) in order to subdue and physically restrain the suspect before making a formal arrest. It is possible that the physical proximity of the suspect contributed to the objective and subjective perception of the need to apply force as a means of self-defence. Officers appeared to make this decision through the application of existing decision rules (e.g., having previously used equipment and/or physical tactics to resolve an incident with a suspect presenting with a hostile demeanour), which suggested that the use of alternative methods (e.g., verbal communication) would be ineffective. Thus, the decision to utilise equipment and/or physical tactics was often made quickly.

The above findings are consistent with existing literature indicating that suspect demeanour and non-compliant or resistant behaviour contribute to the strategic response of the police and increase the likelihood that force and arrest will result (e.g., Brown & Frank, 2005; Novak & Engel, 2005; Novak et al., 2002; Swatt, 2002). The current data suggest that the degree of the suspect’s hostility contributed to the extent to which officers were willing to pursue the establishment of rapport and verbal communication as their primary strategic tool. Incidents that were characterised by intense hostility and impeding violence appeared to prime officers to focus stringently on a single goal – the safety of themselves, their partner and community members. This is consistent with Klinger’s (1996) proposition of a threshold
effect, wherein extreme hostility may exert a significant effect on the police response whilst less severe forms of hostility and aggression may not.

### 7.3.2 Drug intoxication.

The importance of rapport is distinctly highlighted in the preceding section, suggesting that situational ambiguity is confounded by a lack of rapport within the police-suspect dyad. The establishment of rapport was notably more strenuous when suspects were perceived to be drug-affected – they were typically described by officers as unpredictable and as harbouring a strong propensity toward violence:

… they [drug-affected suspects] are just so strong...and they use all of their rage.

… especially if they’re [suspects] drug-affected on ICE, they find the strength that they don’t usually have. They don’t feel pain like they usually do and they can’t be reasoned with sometimes. Yeah makes it hard.

Suspects under the influence of methamphetamine (i.e., ICE) were commonly described as being “difficult to talk to”, “completely off their tree”, “paranoid”, “hostile”, “erratic”, and “violent”. In dealing with these incidents, officers commonly reported deferring to the use of capsicum spray as their strategic option:

He was obviously affected by ICE and probably - a bit taller than I am, so about 6’4 and a big guy. So he was a fiery situation, my partner had pulled out our OC foam, a large canister, and said I was going to spray it on.

I used my spray, my partner had sprayed him once and I thought well maybe I’d spray him again …
Interviewed officers assessed the use of alternative strategic options as likely to be ineffective at the onset of the encounter, giving little time for a more thorough assessment of the situation prior to the implementation of a response. It may be that officers were more frustrated when dealing with drug-affected suspects, as they perceived being unable to engage the suspect verbally. It is also possible that this process was reflective of established cognitive decision rules or heuristics (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974) that specified the use of police equipment in encounters with drug-affected suspects. Such cognitive decision rules may have developed from previous experience with drug-affected persons wherein the application of police equipment was deemed to be most successful. The prior experience may then have guided judgment in the current situation, such that the officers were working under the presumption that other, less coercive alternatives, would have been ineffective and so quickly turned to the use of police equipment to gain control over the situation.

The existing police literature has generally identified the presence of drugs and/or alcohol as a common occurrence among arrestees (e.g., Stetser, 2001; Taylor, Fitzgerald, Hunt, Reardon, & Brownstein, 2001), indicating that retaliation to police involvement commonly occurs under the influence of drugs or alcohol (Reisig, McCluskey, Mastrofski & Terril, 2004) subsequently increasing the odds of police use of force (Paoline & Terrill, 2007; Terrill, 2005) and having significant implications for policing nationally (Westmore, Van Vught, Thomson, Griffiths, & Ryan, 2014) and internationally (Wilkins, Reilly, Rose, Roy, Pledger, & Lee, 2004). Collectively, the research indicates that drug-affected suspects may be at particular risk of police-suspect coercion or violence.

7.3.3 Mental illness.

Suspect mental illness appeared to have a similar effect to drug intoxication in generating ambiguity. However, although officers described a sense of “not knowing what to
do”, incidents involving persons suffering from mental illness were not frequently defined as insoluble:

I sort of find people with mental illness there is some level of communication. If you can find that missing point and sort of like a see saw, if you can find that balancing point you can actually go alright with them.

“Fishing” - the process whereby officers explored numerous topics of conversation until an amicable response was received – was the most commonly applied strategic option in resolving an incident with a person perceived to be suffering from a mental illness. For example, one officer discussed attending an incident wherein the suspect appeared to be suffering from a psychotic episode. The officer made several failed attempts at communication, with the aim of disarming the suspect. The officer then noticed a guitar in the living room and initiated a conversation about the instrument. This led to a broader exchange regarding musical interests and enabled for the development of rapport. The suspect subsequently complied with police direction to “give up the knife” and “sit in the police car”.

The current findings suggest that officers are reluctant to implement police equipment and physical tactics in encounters involving persons experiencing mental illness. This is consistent with contemporary U.S research (e.g., Novak & Engel, 2005), however differs from recent studies investigating the effect of suspect mental illness and police intervention in the Australian context (e.g., Kesic, 2011). Factors such as demeanour, hostility, and impairment by drugs were identified as more predictive of the decision to use equipment than the presence of mental illness. It is possible that the relationship between suspect mental illness and police action might not simply be additive but interactive. The findings of the current research indicate that one such hypothesised interaction is that between mental illness and drug intoxication. Officers commonly described suspects under the influence of illicit
substances as particularly threatening and difficult to engage. Several studies have found that an intoxicated offender is more likely to be arrested (e.g., Stetser, 2001; Taylor et al., 2001), however few have explored the interaction between intoxication and mental illness. One might speculate that the combination of intoxication and mental illness may subject persons suffering from mental illness to greater force during police intervention (Kerr, Morabito, & Watson, 2010).

The strategic options applied in encounters with persons suffering from mental illness inevitably varied – most likely as a result of a host of extra-legal factors as well as copious idiosyncrasies in police discretion (Engel & Silver, 2001). The interviewed officers, however, indicated a consistent tendency to rely on communication to de-escalate the incident. Additional research to study the interpretation of force, resistance, and injury by all parties involved would be beneficial in understanding physical harm during policing encounters.

7.4 Discussion

Exploring the complexity and reality of police officer decision-making at the operational level inevitably suggests that police action is dependent upon officers’ interpretations of situational cues and the speed and skill of their response. The number of variables which impact upon police officer decision-making are innumerable. Perception, action, and reaction – not only of the officer but of their partner, the suspect, other attending service providers, and any present public bystanders – were identified as impacting upon interpretation of the incident and the assessment of threat, risk, and the strategic response. Ambiguous situations were described as time-consuming, providing for few suitable options, generating liability, and posing hazards for officers, the suspect, and others. Amidst the situational ambiguity, officers described striving to attain control through various tactics – balancing their authority with the duty to protect:
... it’s a matter of control and duties of care and being flexible with those once you’re calm enough and identifying them and yeah making contentions and plans to minimise you know any risk.

Although making decisions within dynamic circumstances was widely recognised as the most challenging aspect of policing, officers were presented with few opportunities to discuss such experiences with their supervisors and peers. The clear absence of a structured practice in which officers could reflect on and critically analyse ambiguous police-suspect encounters elevates the risk of introducing systematic decision errors into the decision-making process. This was perhaps best exemplified through the officers’ discussions of dealing with incidents involving hostile and/or drug-affected suspects, wherein implicit decision rules appeared to stipulate the use of police equipment and physical tactics.

Affording officers the opportunity to reflect on and analyse their – and others’ – decisions would enable for such systematic errors to be made more conscious and for possible changes in ways of thinking and practicing to emerge. Supervisors act as powerful gatekeepers in this endeavour, having the authority to guide the values of the police station. By promoting a work environment of learning from experience, supervisors are likely to instil a culture of self-awareness, critical thinking, and problem-solving.
CHAPTER EIGHT: THE INDIVIDUAL DECISION-MAKER

For centuries philosophers and theoreticians have attempted to build accurate models to explain how people make judgments, decisions, and choices (Simon, 1955). It is posited here that the assessment of situational features and the conception of uncertainty – as discussed in the previous chapter - are wholly subjective experiences (Duncan, 1972). Decision-making requires answers to questions such as ‘What kind of a situation is this?’ , ‘What is appropriate for me to do in a situation like this?’ and ‘What consequences may arise from this action?’ Evidently, variation will emerge as a by-product of how much importance is attached to certain information available in the environment and the experience of each decision-maker. Thus, in order to understand why police officers use different strategies it is necessary to consider their idiosyncrasies.

In the naturalistic setting, decision-makers seldom balance costs with benefits - nor do they unwaveringly strive to maximise profit. The ambiguity of the immediate situation, the subjectivity of individual preferences, and the complexity of systemic interrelationships almost invariably outweigh the rational process of diagnosis, evaluation, and selection of the optimal solution (Orasanu & Connolly, 1993). The vast potential for complex interactions between individual psychology and situational demands to unfold is undeniable.

Consequently, acknowledging the possibility of a variety in the choice of an appropriate strategic response is vital. Accepting this contention, the current chapter posits that decision tendencies depend on the content of officers’ knowledge structures, such that making a particular decision is heavily reliant upon the experience and characteristics of the individual decision-maker.
8.1 Training

Many scholars have proposed that Academy training equips police officers with the necessary skills to effectively manoeuvre the environmental demands of police work (Marion, 1998; Ness, 1991) by instilling decision-making skills that can be transferred into real-life police scenarios (Birzer, 2003; Haberfeld, 2002; Marenin, 2004). In essence, police training is deemed a fundamental method of developing complex cognitive processes.

Officers in the current research described Victoria Police Academy training and Occupational Safety Tactics Training (OSTT) as adhering to a traditional classroom-based form of instruction, supplemented by role-playing for situational tactics. Skills appeared to develop through the exposure to logically presented information within a safe, confined, and scheduled environment:

… you get all sorts of training like that sort of stuff but it’s hard to do the theory on it and maybe do one prac which is scripted compared to actually doing it in real life and then actually experiencing it yourself. Like they say you learn the best by doing something and that’s definitely true with this so.

… it’s muscle memory … if your body learns to do the same thing inside and out all the time, you know if I’m training and that’s my natural jab, jab, jab the first thing that happens when I need it is - what’s going to happen? My body is going to tell my brain to switch on my consciousness, I’m going to switch off and the first thing I’m going to do is that, because it’s how your brain reacts. So muscle memory is a, is probably the best way to describe it. So you’re training is good and if you don’t have that initial training you might as well go home …
Officers acknowledged that procedural and legal knowledge was fundamental yet pervasively posited that limited practice of eclectic planning and decision-making detracted from the reality of police work:

... training teaches you *how* to do things, not *when* to do things [italics added] ...

It is important to note this for two reasons. First, it is indicative of the predictability of the training environment and the perception of scenarios as foreseeable. Officers routinely described responding to this typicality with an attitude of having to merely “tick the boxes” rather than engaging in active problem-solving. Second, it suggests that officers are more likely to value learning that is interesting and inspiring, content that is challenging, and a teaching environment that is engaging and collaborative:

... because in OSTT we trained in an environment that’s dull and null here in the real world we bring that to life and you really have to bring it to life ... We can train in isolation that’s fine but we need to be able to link it back. That’s where we fall down as an organisation.

Training instructors that participated in the current study (*n* = 5) were not specifically asked to comment on their experiences of training recruits, regardless - without exception – all reflected on their teaching style. From these discussions it emerged that instructors perceived their role as fundamentally involving the dissemination of policing knowledge. This was predominantly executed through the lecturing method, which instructors described as an “effective” and “powerful” teaching tool. However, trainees provided a contradictory viewpoint - noting that the lecturing method was passive and far removed from the reality of policing:
In a perfect world, and this goes back to OSTT training in a perfect world, you’d make that phone call and another van would magically appear, process the offender, seize the clothes … everything would be done perfectly. But we had to make the next best option I suppose.

Instructors noted the importance of role plays and scenarios in the acquisition of critical thinking skills. The experience of the trainees once again echoed a discrepant viewpoint – scenarios were described as “unrealistic”, “ideal world stuff” that was not representative of true policing practice:

… the scenarios that they will give you, whilst they are realistic, will be you’ll have resources available in this fictional scenario that in a million years would never happen.

The discrepancy in the experience of the instructors and the trainees may have been the result of the trainees’ lack of motivation to learn:

… so they don’t want to be there I can’t teach them … I can’t teach them something they don’t want to learn.

However, it is also possible that the discrepancy is reflective of a lack of effective teaching skills:

I suppose if the person doesn’t want to teach then obviously it’s not really going to be positive for the student, you actually might cause a negative effect. And pass it on, pass it on.

I think, and it’s going to be different for every person that comes out of the Academy because some of them are going to have great trainers and some of them aren’t.
The officers’ widely reported a preference for adult learning techniques in the classroom, a standpoint that is echoed by recent policing literature (Birzer, 2003; Clevelnad & Saville, 2007; Olivia & Compton, 2010). A focus on physical activities and technical legal knowledge does not appear to adequately instil critical thinking skills, the need for teaching methods to be intellectually stimulating and to focus on the actual duties and responsibilities of the profession were pronounced. Encouragingly, a shift away from the traditional police training paradigm is unfolding within Victoria Police. Recruits are currently being intermittently placed in stations during their Academy training period, fostering active learning through the application of taught principles:

Now it’s less time out in the Academy more operation time so they’re learning and it’s also a reward system, you know, after 12 weeks instead of after 5 months … and for 1 week then you can sit at the police station, I get to be a police officer for that week then I get to go back and learn some more then I get to go back and the next time I go back I get to be a police officer by doing some more stuff and that goes on.

Nevertheless, militarism continues to be greatly enmeshed in the training curricula limiting the scope for complex skills such as communication, problem-solving, and cultural diversity to be imparted. Both practitioners and academics agree that the key function of police training is to prepare officers to effectively perform their duties (Marion, 1998; Ness, 1991) yet organisational pressures can often stifle the continued review and revision of training so that it may no longer align with changes in technology, community needs, and organisational demands for cost effectiveness. A focus on the acquisition of skills such as communication, relationship-building, and conflict management may perhaps be more paramount in preparing officers for police work than solely focusing on specific responses to one given situation or demand (Thomas, 2013).
8.2 Experience

Although officers described training as fundamental to the acquisition of specific skills, they noted that more complex cognitive processes (e.g., decision-making) could only be learned through experience. Repetitive exposure to the various situational contingencies of policing has long been posited as crucial to establishing good policing practice (Bayley & Bittner, 1984). The fundamental contention holds that the reality police officers confront in the field is too complex to be reduced to simple principles that can be taught in a classroom setting - “officers commonly portray policing as being essentially a craft in which learning comes exclusively through experience intuitively processed by individual officers” (Bayley & Bittner, 1984, p. 35)

Taking into account individual characteristics and knowledge, it became evident that experienced officers differed from their inexperienced counterparts in relation to the process in which they were processing information and arriving at decision outcomes. Officers with fewer than seven years of experience appeared limited in their ability to engage in such processes rather relied more heavily on directives from senior members or on decisions made jointly within a partnership. The following sections map out the information processing style of experienced police officers and their use of intuition.

8.2.1 Information processing.

As indicated in Figure 9, the stage of the incident frequently determined what type of information processing was adopted by experienced officers. Anticipatory information processing occurred predominantly prior to physical presence at the scene (e.g., during the drive to the scene). Once officers arrived, they described immediately beginning to assess the situation in order to determine the key issues. As the situational components were
progressively better understood, experienced officers were able to make predictions as to the possible risks that may have transpired in the immediate future.

Figure 9. Stages of incident and types of information processing.

8.2.1.1 Anticipatory information processing.

Incidents attended by the police are inevitably defined by an unknown number of unknown variables; the limited information provided by emergency communications does little to remove the uncertainty. Even so, the insufficient information attained prior to arrival at the scene was utilised by experienced officers to formulate an estimation of the situational environment:

… before we get to the job there’s a lot of checks done and obviously we’re only as good as the information that’s communicated and that would determine a great deal in terms of my decision-making processes.

In anticipatory information processing, experienced officers applied information attained prior to arrival at the scene to produce possible representations of the situation’s parameters. The hypothetical scenarios were constructed not only on the basis of available information
but also with regard to the officers’ prior experiences in a similar set of circumstances. Active adaptation of these hypotheses appeared to unfold in the face of live feedback:

It’s flexible and sometimes you’ll go there and you might get a job where someone threatens someone with a knife and you get there and that person is good as gold and sometimes that’s exaggerated by the person making the call but you take, you take precautions in case that it’s true …

8.2.1.2 Active information processing.

Upon arrival, experienced officers turned to active information processing to direct their attention to the immediate environment. They described actively assessing the situation in order to identify the key issues, construct meaning, and determine what information was missing:

… is there any drug or alcohol involved? Whether they have a weapon or ability to get to [a] weapon or potentially get to a weapon?

… you can see it in his face when he starts to grit his teeth and the fists come out … steer his emotions accordingly.

When the key elements of the situation were identified, relatively simple resemblance or goodness of fit criteria were applied to the process of categorising problems. As a means of quickly categorising a new encounter, experienced officers described examining whether the current situation contained traits representative of previously attended incidents. If officers found that the current situation was in some way representative of a previous experience, they appeared to assume that the current situation would follow a similar trajectory.

For example, one officer described an incident characterised by two persons at the scene engaging in physical violence. The officer identified that this situation resembled
several others in terms of the presence of a violent aggressor and a victim. The identification of the key components of the situation led the officer to react in line with previous strategies utilised in similar circumstances – “when somebody is being attacked or something you just do it, you jump in”. The officer reported the objective of the utilised strategy as being “to secure people or get them away”, previously having used batons and capsicum spray to achieve this goal. Having identified the current situation as being reflective of a larger group of instances wherein the common resolution strategies included the use of equipment, the officer “threatened him [suspect] with the spray”. This was sufficient to separate the two parties and reinforced the effectiveness of police equipment in situations characterised by the presence of a violent aggressor and a victim.

8.2.1.3 Future-oriented information processing.

Once a diagnosis of the situation and its precursors were determined and understood, officers applied their experience to predict possible situational outcomes. Real-time, mental projections about how a situation may have unfolded in the immediate or very near future were generated from the available information – referred to here as future-oriented information processing. Officers described the concept of future-oriented information processing as a perceptive and continuously changing anticipation of potential situational events, with a clear focus on risk estimation:

… what if he decided to get out of bed and we’re in a corridor in a more confined space in amongst broken shards of glass … ability to think about the what if s too.

Experienced decision-makers demonstrated a distinct ability to hypothesise risk scenarios whilst functioning under circumstances of severe immediacy and urgency:
I can still slow myself to one second to think and that one second has saved me millions of times.

… sometimes you need to just slow down and think about what’s actually going on and not get caught up in the moment and look at the bigger picture.

Extant literature suggests that in naturalistic settings – with time constraints, changing conditions, and stress-related influences – the decision-maker engages in a continuous assessment of the situation (Berryman, 2008; Klein, Orasanu, Calderwood, & Zsambok, 1993). Such models emphasise situational dynamics and the decision-maker’s experience as being key to the ability to construct, update, and revise one’s state of awareness. It is during situation assessment that the decision-maker is posited to interpret the meaning of the situation; inferring the reasons why the situation appears as it does, the risks that may be present, and the actions that may be implemented.

Strategic choices are said to be identified by comparing the situation with previous experience so that a suitable working model of the current situation can be developed (Kirschenbaum, 1992). This process is comparable to the findings of the current research – where decision-making occurred within a dynamic system and police officers typically needed to engage in an ongoing assessment in order to make and implement effective decisions.

An interesting point of difference in the current research pertained to the officers’ clear preoccupation with risk and threat in predicting possible outcomes. The existing literature argues that the feasibility of a decision choice is the key concern of mental simulation – for the officers in the current research the key concern was the management of risk. Evidently, experienced officers invariably engaged in a risk assessment – considering the suspect’s behaviour, demeanour, physical appearance, and the situational environment -
before implementing a decision choice that aimed to mitigate future risk and ensure the protection and safety of others and the self

8.2.1.4 Sequential information processing.

Some officers described engaging in information processing characterised by a process of elimination that occurred in response to an option choice proving inadequate. For example, one officer discussed being confined in a small space with an approaching wildfire nearing the location. The officer first attempted to start the tank generator, when this was unsuccessful he decided to use the manual pump which was later also assessed as being faulty. Subsequently, the officer set out to search for buckets. Recognising that this would be insufficient to control the blaze, he made further attempts to form a firebreak by using a chainsaw. Ultimately, all options were rejected due to equipment failure. Decision-making in this case was of a serial progression and characterised by opportunistic choices – the officer engaged in a process wherein failed option choices served as the foundation for subsequent option choices. Subsequent options were identified through a quick, situational appraisal rather than a pre-contemplative and planned approach.

Incidents wherein sequential information processing was applied were typically characterised by a life-threatening event that induced a high level of distress. Officers reported identifying death as likely, as such ongoing cognitive activity that tuned perception, attention, and judgment toward threat-related outcomes was abandoned. Decision-making then began to reflect the chaotic nature of the incident itself:

Our radio here in the car isn’t working, no communication except for mobile phones. So I chase this other guy. Back to the car, and I’ve stood with me gun in my hand. Gun in me [my] hand for the whole time and I wasn’t even aware of it.
Following such a distressing event, officers described being in a state of “numbness” that lasted days or even weeks. During this post-fact period, officers described repeated analysis of the situation accompanied by a myriad of “what ifs”:

… if I had more time I could have equipped myself with other options.

… if I had more time then I could’ve you know drawn my OSTT equipment.

Overall, situation assessment and mental risk simulation appeared to be central cognitive mechanisms that facilitated the translation of experience into assessment and action - a process consistently identified in the naturalistic decision-making literature (see Klein, 1999). Researchers contend that experienced decision-makers form decisions through a combined use of mental simulation and intuitive processing, arriving at decisions without analytically comparing the advantages and disadvantages of various options (Simon, 1955). Consistent with the existing propositions, experienced officers in this research reported the use of intuitive processing in discerning the key features of an incident and generating possible risk scenarios.

8.2 Intuition: A central skill.

Intuition was a difficult aspect for experienced officers to explicitly define, it was often referred to as a “gut-feeling”, “a sense” and “just knowing”. Descriptions differed across accounts yet the form of an intuitive feeling was recognisable to many of the officers. That is, experienced officers could identify what intuition felt like within themselves:

… and there was an oh fuck moment, believe you me. Let’s just jump on him it was like oh fuck, oh shit, jump!

The majority of experienced officers described their intuition as arising mainly from knowledge and experience (both work-based and personal). These aspects emphasised the
cognitive elements of intuition and its tendency to involve quick appraisals emanating from domain-specific knowledge:

I always feel it in my stomach, something just tells me - I don’t know whether I feel sick sometimes or just go nah it’s not right it’s like butterflies. It sounds stupid but it just feels like - you get like these silly senses that tell you nah do this or back off. Sometimes it can be reading people, some people don’t know how to do it others do it. I think I can generally read people pretty well, not that you see these people in a car but you can look at them, their manner of driving and go yeah nah this one will go.

Officers described different experiences of how aware or conscious they were in terms of their intuition. For some, intuitive perception appeared to be an involuntarily arising feeling that enabled for information to be received and understood automatically. In this way, information was processed so rapidly that it was difficult for experienced officers to pinpoint exactly what it was that led to their decision:

… it’s over that quick, where is the time to think about this?

… you have to learn to switch off, do your job and think later.

Others reported being aware of their intuitive instinct and utilising this information to guide their assessment of the situation:

Probably just a gut feeling, just that she said she seemed, she seemed quite loud from time to time she was defensive sort of from, from the first time we’d come, she was sort of helpful to us but at the same time - my son didn’t do it.

Intuitive processing appeared to be associated with emotional arousal, such that emotional factors played a dominant role in triggering an intuitive, automatic type of decision.
processing. Anxiety, for example, was frequently described as being closely related to an intuitive assessment of threat:

… we already decided that we’d have to be ready to use our firearms if we need to because there was the threat of firearm there.

Experienced officers were ultimately able to take “that big deep breath” and meaningfully integrate emotional contextual information into the decision process:

I suppose the more you’re exposed to those dynamic situations the more you’re able to control your adrenaline and control your response.

The ability to “see the bigger picture” (i.e., engage in future-oriented information processing) enabled for the conception of emotional arousal as only one source of information, reducing the likelihood that experienced officers would react on an impulse:

… you might think that this is our job, two blokes fighting … and all of a sudden their mates come in and you’re on the ground … we might get injured so let’s just back up a little and see if we can get a few more people in …

… when you, you’ve got tunnel vision … just step back that one little bit, have a look around you, what’s there, then go for it and decide what you want to do then.

The only exception to this was decision-making that occurred under extremely distressing circumstances, for which even the experienced officers had little knowledge. Under these circumstances the officers’ experience did not appear to have sufficient weight in moderating emotional reactions:

… your heart’s beating out of your chest, shit we’re going to get stabbed. Yeah. Yeah OK.
When the job came through we both looked at each other and went what do we do? Because I had never been called to a siege before.

The current research indicates that extensive practice knowledge strengthened police officer decision-making skills, allowing for learned skills to be applied across various situations and dynamics. Like other decision-makers, officers indicated a reliance on intuition and described it as a rapid process that was experienced across various levels of consciousness (Segalowitz, 2007). Although they found it difficult to explicitly stipulate a definition of intuition (Kosowski & Roberts, 2003), officers generally perceived it as a cognitive process that relied heavily on existing knowledge and experience (Moors & De Houwer, 2006). Few officers commented on the possibility that intuitive processing may not necessarily produce the best possible outcome, predominantly emphasising that experience allows for irrelevant patterns or pieces of information to be ignored and focus to be shifted to critical situational components.

A stream of research in cognitive psychology suggests that intuitive decision-making can be fraught with cognitive biases (Kahneman, Slovic, & Tversky, 1982; Kahneman & Tversky, 2000; Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). Paradoxically, however, intuition is also recognised as being central to the decision-making process (e.g., Dane & Pratt, 2007; Epstein, 2010; Sinclair, 2011). Indeed, some research contends that intuition represents a singular route toward making effective decisions under time-constraints (Hogarth, 2001; Sadler-Smith & Shefy, 2004).

These advances notwithstanding, empirical research on intuition remains limited – particularly so in the policing sector. While it is argued that, under certain circumstances, there is merit to employing intuitive information processing (e.g., Kahneman & Klein, 2009), there is a persistent lack of understanding and consensus about what these circumstances may be. Although there is some compelling research on how intuition works (e.g., Zsambok &
Klein, 1997), the conditions under which it works best within the policing context and how to improve its practice are yet to be explored.

8.3 Individual Characteristics

Over half a century of research in psychology, economics, and related fields has indicated that decision-making in the real world deviates systematically from normative standards of rational choice (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). Individual differences reveal an even more nuanced picture, with various personality factors posited to affect the extent and nature of peoples’ cognitive processes (Scott & Bruce, 1995; Stanovich & West, 1999). In this research, officers identified empathy, placidity, and lived experience as key factors that cultivated differences in cognition and decision-making across individual decision-makers.

8.3.1 Empathy.

In describing the type of person who would be most successful in the policing occupation, officers identified empathy as a key personal attribute underlying effective decision-making:

I’ve had PTSD and before I had that I had a different mindset, I didn’t understand really understand mental illness in the sense that I couldn’t get my head around how these people, how the whole mental illness works and having experienced it myself I realise it’s something they can’t control and it is an illness. That’s benefited me a lot and I’m not afraid to tell people, and you know I’ve been through similar things I’ve had PTSD you know, like this guy understands me.

… some members will say so and so reckons that someone is following him, hiding under the house and you know I always stop them and say to them we know that’s probably not the case, but this is probably a mental illness issue but he believes it to
be true … Obviously rather than just laughing at it and thinking it’s funny I think that this poor person thinks that that’s true and they’re petrified by what’s - let’s treat it properly.

Empathy was defined as the conceptual acknowledgment that police action has the potential to have long-standing effects on the parties involved:

… the spoken word or your action is going to impact on them [the suspect] for the rest of their lives.

The ability to transcend one’s own perspective and assume the position of the other was also identified as an elementary feature of practicing an empathic stance:

… that’s the trick, it’s having the verbals to use and it’s trying to put yourself in their position.

Empathy, thus, was understood by the interviewed officers as not merely the absence of violence or coercion but rather as the ability to experience the perspective of the other and to transform this knowledge effectively into behaviour. Taking a “step back” and “seeing” the situation from the view of the suspect enabled officers to more readily formulate the circumstances that gave rise to the incident.

The expression of empathy was at times, however, described as a conditional endeavour. That is, some officers reported expressing empathy only when the suspect reciprocated with compliance:

… if you give me the shits you’ll get virtually nothing from me.

A small number of officers demonstrated a generalised hesitance to practicing an empathic stance, preferring to establish a divide between themselves and the suspect:
I’m working as if I’m in the cage. Other people work as if they’re out of the cage and if you think about the two you’ll be going about your business a lot differently.

This divide appeared to emerge out of a sense of distrust and fear:

… you’re going to meet the most violent people in the world, you may have to shoot a bloke in order for you to go home.

Key to police-suspect encounters, empathy was also considered to be a core feature of effective leadership. Senior members who discussed feeling responsible for the welfare of subordinate officers frequently described “offering an ear”, providing counselling and assistance as behavioural indications of their concern for the welfare of their peers and subordinates:

… you’ve got to be able to … talk to people and communicate with them properly and make sure that their welfare is alright.

8.3.2 Placidity.

In discussing the police personality, officers also identified placidity and patience as advantageous traits:

… people will talk to me and have no problems coming over and having a chat … my personality comes across to people that way.

Officers identified a placid or “laid back” nature as being more conducive to the policing profession, allowing the police officer to cope with and operate effectively under pressure:

I’ve been someone that’s pretty calm under pressure then more so calculating and did my job well and got that feedback later on from the hierarchy that everyone for something like that it went well so.
OK couple of breaths and get in there. And that’s the way I do it, I just calm myself down by taking a deep breath looking at the breathing and using the breathing to give myself time to think.

By comparison, the inability to remain grounded was perceived to result in a failure to adequately develop or maintain rapport:

… other people, unfortunately, are very uptight and emotional and someone else screams and they scream back at them 100 miles an hour.

During the last two decades, a number of personality dimensions including authoritarianism (e.g., Wortley & Homel, 1995), dogmatism (e.g., Henkel, Sheehan, & Reichel, 1997), and ethnocentrism (e.g., Wortley & Homel, 1995) have been investigated in the policing literature. The direction that this research has taken proposes that policing attracts individuals who seek out authority, particularly over persons who violate conventional norms. In the current research the inverse pattern was observed, such that officers identified positive personality traits as being fundamental to effective policing.

Part of the difficulty of delineating particular personality traits for the purpose of estimating job performance is the lack of consensus surrounding what constitutes desirable police officer characteristics (Black, 2000; Barrick & Mount, 1991). Although the use of psychological personality tests to screen out extremely unsuitable applicants is generally agreed upon (Detrick, Chibnall, & Rosso, 2001; Hiatt & Hargrave, 1988; Sellbom, Fischler, & Ben-Porath, 2007), the value of personality traits in predicting successful job performance is far less substantiated (Sanders, 2008). The emerging evidence suggests that the police personality may have little implication for operational policing practice (Wortley, 2003) and that agency socialisation and leadership may be more critical in promoting development (Sanders, 2008).
8.3.3 Lived experience.

Described by one officer as “the life that you’ve had before or the life you’ve had right up to that point, whether it’s in the job or out of the job”, life experience was commonly posited to form the foundation on which judgment was developed. Characteristics such as cultural awareness, maturity, communication skills, responsibility, and the ability to function under pressure were identified as being particularly derivative of “time on this planet” rather than skills accumulated through police hours:

You can’t train that you got to learn that and you learn that also as a parent. So as a parent, I mean I’ve got three children I have to use my verbal skills there also you use your verbal skills with your partner. And this is where - so I’ve been married, I’m coming up to 24 years of marriage, it comes down to again verbal skills being able to talk things out and not just giving up or quitting.

The benefits of prior work experience were often emphasised in regards to equipping police recruits with transferable skills. Dealing with difficult customers was essentially classified as being akin to dealing with difficult suspects:

But I always get people coming in going I want to join the police force what can you tell me about it? I say what are you doing now? I just finished school. Go get a job. Doesn’t matter what you do, go work in a shop, go and get some public exposure, so you can talk to people.

Officers who did not have substantial life experience (i.e., young recruits) were described as “sheltered” and likely to react to dynamic situations with fear and perplexity:

I thought everybody in the universe approached life the same as me, we’re just always trying to do the right thing and not harming anybody and all that sort of stuff and it
wasn’t until I joined and started dealing with people that I realised some people - every word that comes out of their mouth is a lie and they don’t want the best, and all that sort of thing. It took me a while to get that because that wasn’t my life approach.

… he was only a few months in the job too, he blanked out a little bit to the point where I just took the radio off him and did it myself.

The importance of lived experience stressed by the officers in the current thesis is consistent with the intuitive approach assumed by police practitioners - who contend that older applicants possess more maturity and thus make better police officers. However, there is seemingly an absence of any published literature to support these anecdotal claims. Currently, Victoria Police does not stipulate experience as a mandatory requirement – the only requirement having any real relevance being that of the minimum age. Overall, however, pre-selection requirements regarding age and work experience appear to be arbitrarily specified (Decker & Huckabee, 2002) with little empirical evidence to indicate whether lived experience results in better police performance.

8.4 Discussion

The coercive arm of government is an accessible, interactive, and dynamic organisation that often presents itself as the first line responder. Police officers must often face situations that require quick, on-the-spot decision-making. Although one might assume that police decisions are based on the rational and effective use of evidence taught through police training, the current findings and the existing literature base suggest that decision-makers are limited in their capacity to produce uniform and optimal decision outcomes (Klein et al., 1993).

Victoria Police sets forth a formal collection of shared rules and procedures that are imposed onto recruits during Academy training and reinforced during OSTT. This entails the
overlearning of psychomotor skills as well as the prototypical strategies to be implemented to resolve particular types of situations (e.g., cordon and contain a situation that may escalate). Yet knowledge of when and why certain actions or strategies are performed appears to derive more so from policing experience. Experience enables the officer to develop examples, that is, a general idea of how a situation with a particular set of circumstances unfolds and what actions are likely to be successful. In this way, the individual officer serves as an element in the meaning-making process and develops an intuitive, tacit knowledge that enables him or her to function within increasingly complex situations (e.g., Bonabeau, 2003; Cesna & Mosier, 2005). The ability to draw upon existing knowledge can act as an invaluable resource during time pressured and ill-defined circumstances. However, as has been highlighted in both the current and previous chapters, pre-existing notions of how a particular scenario may unfold can introduce systematic bias into the decision-making process. This is especially so when previous negative experiences are utilised as a means of understanding the current situation.

The review of the effect of training in Chapter Two indicated that the contingent nature of training’s effects depend not only on the logistics and content of the curricula, but also on the organisational environment in which the police officer operates. Police officers working within stations that foster and encourage training principles - manifested through ongoing, supportive supervisory practices - are able to sustain and adhere to training doctrines (Mastrofski & Ritti, 1996). To create an environment conducive to training practices, police supervisors must promote open communication and inter-rank collaboration at the police station level. By engaging officers in discussion of how training applies to real-life scenarios, identifying how training may have been utilised in the resolution of attended incidents, and adding to the knowledge instilled by Academy training and/or OSTT supervisors can create a more concrete understanding of how training principles can be
applied to police work.

Similarly, police supervisors play a vital role in facilitating skill development that occurs through experience. By reflecting on decision-making during a particular incident officers can begin to identify the factors that contribute to their situation assessment - identifying the sources of their decision (e.g., previous experience in a similar set of circumstances) and exploring the costs and risks of these. Individual traits can also be considered in terms of whether they may be impeding upon or promoting the effective resolution of police-suspect encounters.

The current and preceding chapters have delineated several organisational, situational, and individual factors that set the decision context. In the following chapter the three lines of inquiry are corroborated into one overarching theory of police officer decision-making, a grounded theory that describes the mechanisms by which policing may deal with the inherent uncertainty of its work.
CHAPTER NINE: A GROUNDED THEORY OF POLICE OFFICER DECISION-MAKING

In this chapter the level of theoretical abstraction is lifted beyond the experience of the interviewed officers and a grounded theory of police officer decision-making – the Social Leadership Model - is presented that may be worked with and developed in future research endeavours. This research set out to explore the process of police officer decision-making with the guiding questions of: (i) how does the decision-making process unfold amidst dynamic and fast-paced circumstances? and (ii) what information or strategies do police officers use to arrive at a decision outcome? Through an analysis of 44 interviews depicting ambiguous, stressful, and potentially violent incidents, an account of how the policing culture, situational ambiguity, and individual characteristics may contribute to decision-making within dynamic police encounters is provided. A simple illustration of these three composite factors is provided in Figure 10. A detailed discussion of the conceptual framework follows.

It should be noted that the data obtained from the interviews as shown in the quotations used throughout the thesis were consistent with other sections of the interviews and were only meant to act as a representative sample. The complete interview transcripts and the cross-section of the interviews provided more cogent data that led to the propositions developed. The findings suggest that uncertainty is a key feature of the policing context. The para-military hierarchy imposed upon the police force appears to play a stabilising role - attempting to impart some form of predictability and certainty onto what is an uncertain workplace. Moreover, the officers indicated that a focus on leadership may positively impact the police culture through the development and performance of individual officers. This is consistent with not only the existing police literature but emerging evidence in other related fields (e.g., Mann, Gordon, & MacLeod, 2009).
Figure 10. Three composite factors of uncertainty in the policing context.
9.1 Reducing Uncertainty

Uncertainty is an inescapable and omnipresent fact of the human condition. Social scientists and organisational theorists have long accepted that the world can be a chaotic, contradictory, and incomprehensible place:

Uncertainty is a fact with which all forms of life must be prepared to contend. At all levels of biological complexity there is uncertainty about the significance of signs or stimuli and about the possible consequences of actions. At all levels, action must be taken before uncertainty is unresolved … and a general ability to respond appropriately when the unexpected happens (Kahneman et al., 1982, p. 508).

Officers reported functioning alongside extraordinary ambiguity regarding the nature and significance of potential threats and what strategies, tactics, and resources were needed to resolve them (e.g., Crank, 1998; Manning, 1997). As discussed in Chapter Seven, officers identified several sources of situational ambiguity. Firstly, incidents were considered as increasing in complexity if third parties (i.e., ambulance personnel and public bystanders) were present at the scene. Officers commonly equated the presence of third parties as creating demands on resources, introducing a greater sense of responsibility, and at times delaying incident resolution. Second, certain police partnerships added to situational ambiguity, particularly so if trust and confidence could not readily be established between the attending officers. A lack of trust in the other limited the strategic options officers were willing to implement, mostly due to uncertainty as to whether the partner would respond appropriately or provide adequate support. Finally, various suspect characteristics had a substantial effect on the extent to which officers described a sense of “not knowing what to do”. Specifically, suspects presenting with a hostile demeanour, those that were under the influence of drugs and/or suffering from an episode of mental illness during the period of the encounter were
perceived as more difficult to engage. Consequently, officers described typically utilising coercive tactics (e.g., use of equipment) in an attempt to deescalate the situation and attain control.

Evidently, the police occupational environment is an ambiguous and uncertain one. Officers must at all times remain alert to the possibility that a hostile or threatening encounter may transpire. In coping with this undertone of threat uncertainty, the police organisational culture appears to have established several mechanisms that aim to control or moderate the negative or adverse effects of the external environment. The imposition of a strict hierarchy, which was said to rely on formal positions of seniority and a myriad of policies and protocols, acted as a symbolic depiction of order and stabilisation. In addition, officers themselves reported having to develop strategic mechanisms that allowed them to impart some control over their environment. These organisational- and individual-level processes are discussed in further detail in the sections that follow.

9.1.1 Reducing uncertainty through organisational processes.

The police as an organisation occupies a precarious position; endowed with the power of coercive force and consequently confined by high standards of conduct and accountability. This is perhaps most compellingly highlighted by the fact that the police entity is demarcated by an almost indefinite number of externally and internally imposed boundaries. Legal boundaries determine acceptable conduct and set limits upon the organisation’s capacity and discretion – defining the actions and conditions for which the police are responsible. The judiciary reviews and holds the police to account, often redefining the rules of conduct set by the legislature when challenges are brought. Jurisdictional boundaries specify the geographical limits of police responsibility. Organisational boundaries determine membership. A geopolitical boundary marks the invisible divide between the police and the community, establishing the police and the non-police. All of these boundaries act to define
the police as a goal-directed system and simultaneously characterise it as an interconnected activity that occurs among multiple networked actors.

In the face of the external environment, the internally instituted police hierarchy aims to constrain uncertainty by codifying procedures, actions, rules, and instructions and by assuming individual agency. It does so by assigning authority to individual officers and by emphasising individual action whilst recognising that individual capacity, skill, and behaviour form discretionary responsibility and accountability. Admittedly, different policing practices were observed across stations. Factors inducing variation in police station culture included geographical region and supervisor characteristics, creating differences in the extent to which hierarchical dynamics were applied to operational duties and social relations. This is consistent with other studies investigating the effect of police culture on police officer decision-making, which have persistently indicated a high level of variation across police stations (e.g., Chappell et al., 2006; Liederbach & Travis, 2008; Zhao et al., 2010). The current findings suggest that the police culture can best be conceived of as an active and fluctuating enterprise that is born into, develops out of and adapts to its immediate environment. Given this, it ought to be considered in tandem with the characteristics of the supervisors leading it, the officers experiencing it as well as the local community context within which it materialises.

Regardless of any variation, officers fundamentally experienced their organisational environment as highly structured and embodying practices that indicated high uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 1980). That is, the goals, visions, strategies, and objectives of the police were understood by officers as defining its purpose primarily in terms of the mitigation and management of risk. Consequently, resources were directed toward the prevention of undesired end states and endeavours that aimed to increase the standardised methods of coping with threat uncertainty (e.g., standard operational procedures). This is consistent with
the findings of existing organisational research, which contends that most organisations seek out tools such as strategic planning, cost-benefit analysis, and other analytical techniques to categorise, quantify and reify the future (e.g., Clampitt & DeKoch, 1999; Sitkin, Cardinal, & Bijlsma-Frankema, 2010).

9.1.2 Reducing uncertainty through individual processes.

Experienced officers commonly noted that uncertainty could be reduced by one of two means; (i) if the decision-maker possessed enough knowledge of the problem or (ii) if the decision-maker was sufficiently experienced. In regards to the former, experienced officers highlighted the importance of collecting information prior to arrival at the scene (i.e., anticipatory information processing) and throughout the encounter (i.e., active information processing) prior to making a decision. However, when there was no additional information available or time constraints inhibited the collection and processing of further information, officers attested to the importance of extrapolating knowledge from prior experience. Officers typically described this process as using their gut or intuition to go beyond what is firmly known and to imagine and prepare for possible future developments (i.e., future-oriented information processing). This is in line with the tenants of the Naturalistic Decision-Making (NDM) literature (e.g., Klein, 1999) and the propositions of the heuristics and biases paradigm (Kahneman et al., 1982; Smithson, 1989).

The NDM model has comprehensively investigated the effect of expertise on decision-making and coping under uncertainty – the most general conclusion being that people use different decision-making strategies depending upon their experience and the immediate decision context (e.g., Lehto, 1977; Lipshitz & Strauss, 1997; Salas, Prince, Baker, & Shrestha, 1995). Similarly, the heuristics and biases paradigm has found that human decision-makers cope with uncertainty by simplifying the complexity of the external
environment through the application of heuristics – rules of thumb that allow for quick decision outcomes (Kahneman et al., 1982). Officers in the current research described utilising both strategies when operating within volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous situations.

9.2 Thriving on Uncertainty

In the 1980s and 1990s several police academics posited the importance of police leadership and supervision in effecting the behaviour of police officers (e.g., Brewer et al., 1994; Van Maanen, 1983). Power over others was said to be exercised by police supervisors as a means of achieving certain goals; coordinating resources, resolving dynamic situations, and establishing control over other's behaviour. Yet further examinations of this hypothesis suggested that the effect of supervisors varied considerably across studies and was generally found to be small in magnitude (e.g., Brown, 1988; Engel, 2000). These early investigations did not account for the fact that police leadership is a highly relational, collective, and purposeful endeavour – police leaders do not necessarily yield control and their position cannot be regarded as entirely inseparable from the needs, motivations, and goals of subordinate ranks. Rather leadership can perhaps best be defined by the interactions and relations that exist between officers of differing rank and skill level who share a common purpose and objective. In this way the police organisation can be perceived as an elaborate relational network of persons, moving forward together through a complex interplay between cultural factors, individual characteristics, and the socio-graphical environment in which they function.

Rather than understanding police leadership as the centralisation of power, this thesis argues that the purpose of police leadership is to foster interactions and relationships among agents - exposing officers to a multiplicity of ways in which information can be perceived and dealt with. Police supervisors act to distribute knowledge across rank segments and
promote collaborative action aimed at attaining a common objective. Such forms of knowledge may be communicated by means of shared experiences and collective social and organisational frames – elements that can be encouraged through adequate supervision arrangements (e.g., designated times to reflect on difficult experiences/dilemmas, access to regular supervisory/group peer support).

The effectiveness of the para-military hierarchy and its assignment of centralised power to senior officers has come under extensive scrutiny and a call for the policing sector to adopt more modern approaches has accumulated widespread support (Engel, 2001). Responding to uncertainty by trying to control officer discretion and action can no longer be deemed effective. A viable alternative may be the implementation of leadership that is purposeful, collaborative, and value-based and that aims to build positive relations within the organisation and between the organisation and all relevant stakeholders. The model posited in the current chapter - termed the Social Leadership Model – aims to provide such a framework.

The Social Leadership Model emphasises the importance of relational dynamics and comprises two fundamental components; (i) effective relationships - at the core of which lie the values of establishing common purpose, engaging in communication, and working in collaboration – and, (ii) reflective practice– encouraging the systematic analysis of situations. Each of these factors is addressed in greater detail in the following sections.

9.2.1 Social leadership: Promoting effective relationships.

The Social Leadership Model posited in this chapter contends that although individual police officers present with idiosyncratic cognitions and behaviours (resulting from variation in experience and personal characteristics), they nevertheless function in, and as part of mutual relationships with others and the surrounding environment. It is not the individual
characteristics of police officers that creates the working environment rather it is the interaction between these individual characteristics, the situation, and the local police environment that produce the dynamics of police work. Police supervisors need to be concerned with identifying relationships between network elements and understanding relational mechanisms; think about how they communicate with subordinates; and be cognisant of the macro- and micro-processes involved in socially constructing and organising collective activities.

Figure 11 illustrates the three key relationship characteristics that police supervisors must promote in order for police officers to effectively manoeuvre the complexity of their working environment. From this perspective, police relationships are conceptualised as a cyclical process, relying heavily on the construction and maintenance of effective communication, a common purpose, and a collaborative approach.

*Figure 11. Components of effective relationships in policing environment*
9.2.1.1 Communication.

From the perspective of the Social Leadership Model, communication-based activity is the first and foremost task of the police supervisor. Communication - the ability of the supervisor to send, receive, and regulate verbal messages and understand social situations, social norms and social cues (Hackman & Johnson, 2013) - enables for the supervisor’s values to be presented and transmitted, for knowledge to be shared, and for a common purpose to develop. A fundamental role of the police supervisor is to be a catalyst for conversation, imparting clear and attainable objectives onto officers. Performance effectiveness can be facilitated by communication that occurs on a day-to-day basis, where officers are free to cooperate without having to abide by strict rules of hierarchy. Dialogue that transcends organisational rank segments creates trust and cohesion, opens individuals to differing realities and worldviews, and promotes the ethical and moral values emphasised by the local community. In this way, officers become more aware of their and others roles and responsibilities and can act in accordance with these during ambiguous police-suspect encounters.

9.2.1.2 Common purpose.

Common or shared purpose, the second dimension of police relationships, exists when group members have similar understandings of their team’s primary objectives and take steps to ensure a focus on collective goals (Hackman & Johnson, 2013). The police teams described by the interviewed officers varied in composition but consistently comprised of many layers of rank, from the Constable to the Senior Sergeant. The culture of this stringent hierarchy was said to impose a high level of centralisation, such that seniors often utilised their authority to control and manage the use of officer discretion. Open and clear communication of the team’s shared objective would enable for authority to be more equally distributed down the rank structure and allow for more flexible and localised responses to
Organisational statements of missions, vision and values have long been a staple of the strategic planning process (see Victoria Police Blue Paper, 2014b). Yet active leadership is needed at the local and individual level to impart, interpret, and apply these objectives into day-to-day operational duties. The common purpose should go beyond numbers and logistical information and instead provide agreed-upon goals, clear directives for the future, and a daily yardstick with which officers can reflect on their organisation’s mission, vision, and values in their regular work activities. In reaching a common purpose police supervisors need to work together with personnel to clearly define the issues facing the station, ensure that there is adequate time for discussion, and encourage individual officers to provide their position on the issue/s. A shared purpose allows individual officers to recognise the value of their designated roles and to adopt collective direction. Interaction, cooperation, and commitment to the organisation replace the need for a single leader to issue directives as officers come to function on the basis of a shared understanding (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 2007).

9.2.1.3 Collaboration.

The Social Leadership Model is grounded in relationships: in these relationships the ability to work collaboratively is essential. Collaboration is defined as the development of a common purpose and the sharing of responsibility and accountability in this pursuit. Collaboration requires the establishment of mutually beneficial goals and engaged group members, with supervisors directing the group toward operationalisation of objectives. An effective police supervisor must be willing to redistribute the power assigned by the hierarchy whilst at the same time assuming responsibility for and ownership of the group process and its outcomes.

There exist undeniable practical limits to collaboration, particularly when quick
decisions are needed. Although an authoritarian style is likely to produce fast and consistent
decisions, it requires for the elimination of officer discretion and for the senior to have
sufficient insight into unfolding incidents. With a focus on relationships and social capital,
supervisors can foster and facilitate an organisational change towards a collaborative cultural
identity, wherein officers collaborate with each other, other emergency and public services as
well as the community in resolving incidents.

The relational component of the Social Leadership Model is consistent with other
relational theories in that it is situated within the social constructionist paradigm, which
contends that people exist in mutual relationships with others and their surroundings – we
both shape, and are shaped by the social experiences of our everyday interactions (Gergen,
1999). The relational component suggests that leadership is actually a non-hierarchical
process that is distributed through the organisational practice of communication, common
purpose, and collaboration. Consequently, leadership is something that collaborating actors
do within relational interactions (Pearce & Conger, 2003) that facilitates understanding of the
complex occupational environment, guides the process of problem-solving, and shapes
strategic direction and practical action.

9.2.2 Social leadership: Promoting reflective practice.

… it’s a learning curve, we’re not going to come around and have their head for it
because they’ve made a mistake. They’ll make it again and I’m going to jump on
them but sometimes the best way to learn is to make the mistake but you’ve just got to
be able to then identify it early so that we can go through it and read the [inaudible
word] and minimise their risks, for the department, the community or the case. So it’s
a matter of just speaking to them, that’s why we do the debrief - then they’ve actually
seen it. Yup it took me a long time to do this because I was thinking this is the right
way to go. Look a lot of the times too they might have good ideas come back and you
know like everybody’s different.

Although policing has traditionally been conceptualised as a vocation requiring the practical
application of professional knowledge and practice, the data arising from the interviews
suggests that officers are acutely aware of the fluid nature of the context within which they
operate and the commonality with which they face issues that cannot be easily
compartmentalised. Despite this it is surprising to note that there is scarcely any literature –
with the exception of Copley (2011) - discussing reflection and reflective learning within the
police force.

Chong (2009) defined reflection as a cognitive process that brings together several
stages of deliberate explorations focused on officer skill and outcomes. Reflection involves
reviewing one’s own values and assumptions: considering broader social, political, and
professional issues that may be relevant to a specific incident (Bulman & Schutz, 2013; Kolb,
1984) with the aim of improving strategic action. A review of the various models of
reflective practice is beyond the scope of the current thesis (for a review see Moon, 1999).
For the purpose of the current chapter it will suffice to specify that the capacity for reflection
– as events are unfolding and post-event – is an essential component of skilful policing
practice.

Reflection and reflective practice are frequently noted across various domains of
literature as increasingly essential attributes of competent professionals (e.g., Beecher,
Lindemann, Morzinski, & Simpson, 1997; Sobral, 2000) and often contrasted to routine
action guided by tradition, habit or authority. In terms of the policing context, as an officer’s
professional identity is developed, there are aspects of learning that call for the understanding
of personal beliefs, attitudes, and values in relation to those endorsed by the police culture
(Epstein, 1999). The observations, behaviours, and skills that officers encounter during their
operational practice and throughout their professional lives must be welcomed by the police supervisor and acknowledged as having value and applicability. It is within this acceptance of learning and development that the true nature of social leadership dwells. For example, by saying ‘Tell me what you have done’ and ‘Show me what you have learned’ the police supervisor sets the expectation of reflective practice, creating a space wherein officers can discuss dilemmas in their work and have access to adequate social support.

Reflection can occur in action (during the performance of the task) and/or post-action (reflecting after the performance of the task). In the current thesis, experienced police officers demonstrated a strong ability to reflect in action (see Schon, 1983) or “think on your feet” (i.e., active and future-oriented information processing), assessing the situation and the possible risks in a rapid trajectory. Less experienced officers reported benefiting more from post-hoc reflection (see Schon, 1983). Regardless of the experience of the officers, unless encouraged to share their thoughts, the process of reflection may remain largely internal. The risks associated with introspective reflection pertain to the development or maintenance of certain perspectives, which may inevitably impact upon what information is processed, how the information is interpreted, and what action is taken. Essentially, if reflective practice remains solely introspective it may stifle professional development as decision-makers are not necessarily adept at identifying the limitations of their own knowledge (Dunning, Johnson, Ehrlinger, & Kruger, 2003). This may be especially so in a field where physical and emotional demands are at times overwhelming and wherein one’s ethics and morals are frequently tested.

Boud, Cressey and Docherty (2006) attested to the use of reflective practice, particularly in situations where ambiguity cannot be controlled, as an effective method through which the decision-maker can focus on and understand the problematic situation without making a premature rush to judgment. In this way, reflection can be conceptualised
as an open process that deals with “matters that by definition do not have a ready solution or are not clearly formulated” (Boud et al., 2006, p. 22). Officers will, of course, nevertheless continue to be affected by the situational factors identified in Chapter Seven (and a host of other factors delineated in the policing literature), and they will undoubtedly continue to act on the basis of intuition or “gut-feelings”. However, by asking questions such as ‘What is/was the situation?’, ‘How does/did the situation differ from other situations experienced in the past?’, ‘How do/did I feel being in the situation?’, ‘What thoughts do/did I have about the situation?’, ‘What do/did I do?’, ‘What do/did I think about what I did?’, ‘Why should/did I implement that decision choice?’ and ‘What may I do differently in the future?’ the focus is shifted to examining the external and internal factors that may influence the decision-making process.

Research indicates that creating time and regular opportunities for dialogical reflection and ensuring access to a mentor for continuing professional development are essential to promoting reflective practice (e.g., Raban et al., 2007). To facilitate reflection, police supervisors require depth of knowledge and skill in creating a climate of trust. Police supervisors must possess adequate policing knowledge so that they may aid fellow officers in identifying, mobilising, and developing their own strengths in policing practice. However, police supervisors must also have strong reflective skills if they are to serve as role models. The ability to communicate effectively and develop strong interpersonal relationships is fundamental to helping officers recognise patterns in their practice.

Hoyrup and Elkjaer (2006) provided a useful framework for considering reflection within work contexts that includes four perspectives; individualised, critical, socialised, and organisational:
- Individualised perspective – “Reflection is prompted by a complex situation involving problems, uncertainty and ambiguity” (Hoyrup & Elkjaer, 2006, p. 32) and is experienced primarily at an introspective level.

- Critical perspective – Critical reflection involves the questioning of existing assumptions and may include consideration of how social, cultural, and political factors can impact upon the individual and their cognitive processes.

- Socialised perspective – “The process of reflection is collective, we reflect together with trusted others in the midst of practice” (Hoyrup & Elkjaer, 2006, p. 36). Social reflection may take the form of peer groups that meet on a regular basis to collectively learn from mistakes, share knowledge, and challenge each other through the provision of feedback.

- Organisational perspective – The necessary organisational processes that create and sustain opportunities for organisational learning and change. These may include the development of communities of practice or structures that promote reflection and critical thinking (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Several learning programmes have been created in accordance with Hoyrup and Elkjaer’s principles and applied to the military and fire services in the U.S. (e.g., Sutton & Cook, 2003). One such program is Staff Ride (Sutton & Cook, 2003), which utilises real-life experiences to encourage shifts in perspective-taking in the exploration of various conceptions of a single situation. The program has been applied in Australia, first by the Tasmanian Parks and Wildfire Services in 2010 and later by the Country Fire Association in 2012 (Stack, 2014). The Social Leadership Model is consistent with such reflective learning programs as it firmly locates individual experiences within a broader social environment. The theory integrates the ever-present shadow of uncertainty with the officers expressed need to reflect on their practice alone as well as with their colleagues and seniors. The Social
Leadership Model identifies police leaders as the advocates of Hoyrup and Elkjaer’s (2006) organisational perspective and as pivotal agents that must drive the implementation of structured and ongoing reflection practices that need to be appropriately designed for the policing context.

9.3 Implications

This thesis provides a framework of leadership that challenges the effectiveness of the traditional, authoritarian, and bureaucratic police supervisor and adds to the growing push for senior members to adopt modern approaches. It is argued that improving police relationships requires a shift in perspective – recognising policing as a dynamic, nonlinear process that ebbs and flows. To this end, it is critical to acknowledge that decision-making is not simply the result of the cognitive properties or processes of individual decision-makers or single situational factors rather it is the accumulated influence of these factors that inevitably occur within cultural and social dynamics.

The Social Leadership Model affords a more nuanced understanding of policing practice and is particularly useful in collective sense making in that it is designed to allow for shared understanding through group-level collaboration and free flowing communication. The model provides a way in which reflective practice can be introduced into the policing context including different ways of talking about problems and experiences and minimising the pitfalls that may arise from blindly subscribing to a particular understanding of situations. The model is compatible with reflective learning programs that have already been created and implemented across various emergency service providers.

The Social Leadership Model identifies police supervisors as pivotal aspects of the implementation of reflective practice programs. Good administrators sometimes fail to fully grasp the importance of social structure and its role in organisational operations. Police supervisors need to be able to accurately perceive the social network relations that connect
members and to actively participate in and manage these if they are to promote a learning environment. Social capital exists at all levels of the police organisation - just as the Sergeant is expected to display sound judgment, initiative, and clear communication in the command of his or her subordinates, so too is the Constable, working alone, expected to display leadership in every situation he or she faces. Thus, one cannot focus merely on the individual whilst overlooking the embeddedness of that individual in the social ties of the police agency.

Reflective practice, with its intention to understand action, allows for an examination of the concealed processes of professional life. As Mezirow (1990) noted, reflective practice is “becoming critically aware of how and why our presuppositions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand and feel about our world” (p. 14). Reflection may be most useful when viewed as a learning strategy. Used in this way it may assist learning; connecting and integrating new learning to existing knowledge and skills. This may be particularly beneficial in ambiguous encounters where decision rules developed through previous experience may be incorrectly applied.

As with any other skills, reflective practice and its role in learning may not be explicitly apparent to officers. A structured program will need to be developed by future research that can then be implemented in vivo to guide practice, particularly so in the early stages. An important task for the police supervisor during this process will be that of acting as a powerful role model. By exposing their own reasoning processes and sharing their own experience and knowledge, as well as inviting contribution from other officers, the police supervisor can endorse reflection as both a collaborative, and an individual process. Furthermore, as organisational advocates, police supervisors will need to contend with engrained aspects of the police culture that may not necessarily endorse or value reflective practice as a learning strategy.

An incentive to nevertheless develop and apply reflective practice programs is the fact
that policing will continue to experience pressure on resources, particularly as demands on emergency services increase. Such trends are likely to place greater stressors and cognitive demands on police officers and strategies to regulate thinking to avoid decision biases will become increasingly important. Reflective practice presents as a useful tool in examining potential sources of bias and identifying alternative perspectives so that officers are able to get the best outcomes possible under dynamic and challenging conditions. The ability to critique personal decisions and identify biases is undoubtedly a difficult and abstract one. However, there is strong evidence to suggest that such higher-level thinking skills can be taught to decision-makers of all levels of experience; granted that the opportunity is afforded and adequate instruction is given (Frye & Wearing, 2014). Reviewing past incidents provides a substantial resource for organisational learning that can be further amalgamated through effective police leadership and well-designed reflective practice programs.

Several researchers have identified some form of improvement in learning through reflection (e.g., Glaze, 2001; Pinsky, Monson, & Irby, 1998; Sobral, 2000), and these relationships need to be further clarified in the policing context. Understandably, the quantification of reflective practice is challenging. Yet as understanding of reflection develops in other fields, there will be a need for studies with rigorous designs that will allow for the evaluation of different learning strategies in the policing sector. Future research is needed to present practical suggestion to enhance the police force’s capacity to implement reflective learning. Further studies may choose to begin by investigating the perceptions of officers regarding reflective practice and the extent to which - and in what form - it may already be occurring.

The evidence reported in the last four chapters of this thesis warrant a series of implications for policy and practice. The evidence presented suggests that police leadership
has the potential to have a direct positive impact on officer performance and effectiveness.

The implications for policy makers, therefore, are as follows:

1. Policy should be introduced to support internal collaboration and organisational change. This recommendation indicates the need for shared responsibility in the process of organisational change and speaks to the importance of policy in supporting ground-level developments. Police supervisors are unlikely to implement or maintain a structured reflective practice within their station unless it is a demand identified by policing mandates.

2. Models of effective police leadership need to be investigated to identify exemplars of good practice. Once these are established, a well-planned implementation process needs to follow wherein the identified training programs and policing practice can be applied. The impact of introducing such a model of police leadership will need to be evaluated with a view to judging the effect upon supervisor performance, effectiveness, and morale.

The implications for practice are multi-fold and include:

1. Performance improvement requires the participation of all leaders - including local supervisors and more highly ranked police personnel. The Social Leadership Model suggests that distributed leadership is needed for creating dialogue that may influence how officers operate and make decisions in dynamic situations. Open communication will act to strengthen relationships and enable for more reflective and genuine reflection on errors in judgment, which will allow for police leaders to explore and challenge biases so that future practice may improve.

2. Collaboration is essential, however, if this is to occur, police leaders and officers must be given the time and support to effectively engage in reflective practice.
3. An increased focus on how best to meet various leadership needs associated with different regions (i.e., geographical location) is needed. As has been demonstrated, rural and urban environments attract disparate policing practices and must cope with different strains on resources and community relationships. It is suggested that police policy makers consider that one size does not fit all when considering function and accountability across rural and urban contexts.

4. The police organisation should do more to support the preparation and professional development of police leaders. Although the pressure on police leaders is ever expanding, the level of support extended to them appears to have remained comparatively constant. There is evidence to suggest that strong police leadership can be developed through a combination of education, experience, and mentorship (Schafer, 2009, 2010). This is a matter that calls for additional funding to be invested in order to identify the specific skills that need to be targeted and the most effective means by which these can be instilled.

The Social Leadership Model calls for leadership preparation programs that incorporate the following:

1. Knowledgeable trainers that use active learning instructional strategies to engage adult learners,

2. Supportive program structures that promote positive relationships and enhance professional socialisation,

3. Authentic field experiences that enable police leaders to practice implementing reflective practice ‘on the ground’ so as to allow experiential learning and skill development.
The implications for future research reside in the need for the collection of empirical evidence that:

1. Examines how useful and meaningful the Social Leadership Model is to a wide variety of police contexts and circumstances,
2. Elucidates different models, approaches and forms of police leadership in practice,
3. Identifies how police leadership can best be developed and facilitated ‘on the ground’,
4. Investigates the relationship between police leadership and officer performance,
5. Provides case study exemplars of best practice and guidelines for police makers about creating the conditions in which police leadership can flourish.

9.4 Limitations

Several precautions should be considered before applying this study’s grounded theory. First, epistemological and research methodologies utilised in the current research were not designed to produce generalisable data and conclusions. Rather the current research aspired to produce an in-depth analysis of decision-making in a particular setting (i.e., Victoria Police stations) as experienced by particular individuals (i.e., the interviewed officers). Second, it is important to note that the researcher filtered and interpreted the data through her own idiosyncratic perceptions. It is possible that another researcher may have produced a disparate conceptualisation of the interview data, as there is undoubtedly a multitude of possible prisms through which the concepts could have been explored. To ensure the trustworthiness of the emerging theory, the research adhered to Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) evaluative framework – establishing credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (see Chapter Five) in providing an appropriate and useful analysis.
9.5 Conclusion

This inquiry has been undertaken with the aim to develop understanding and theory regarding police officer decision-making. The importance of studying real-life decision-making is well recognised as a vital endeavour in many disciplines yet has received inadequate research attention within the policing context. The police literature has not progressed sufficiently in developing a more pronounced interest in explicating real-life decision-making despite the increased criticism of the police force by the community, ruptured police-community relations, and ever-expanding standards of accountability and governance. The current research aimed to address this gap through building grounded theory based on the experiences of police officers - an approach to research for which the CGT method was specifically designed (Charmaz, 2006).

The theoretical position of the CGT method provided an appropriate fit for examining personal stories to gain knowledge about a complex phenomenon. The iterative process espoused by grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) enabled for authentic and credible theory to be developed through rigorous and systematic methods, such as line-by-line coding, constant comparison, categorising of codes into themes and patterns, and integration of these codes and patterns into an overarching theoretical framework. Location of the themes in relation to the available literature enabled for further development and refinement of the theoretical propositions (Charmaz, 2006).

The findings demonstrated that police officers functioned within a vacuum of uncertainty that stemmed from the dynamic and unpredictable nature of their working environment. The situations within which officers operated were often replete with ambiguities, stemming from both external and internal processes. The external difficulties most often mentioned included the presence of third parties, inability to trust one’s partner, and suspects presenting with complex needs. Experience served as the most prominent
individual factor, indicating that experienced officers manoeuvred through ambiguous situations by creating cognitive strategies and behavioural templates that enabled for rapid decision-making. The organisational context was said to impart a sense of stability onto the day-to-day duties of officers by imposing structure through a centralised command system. The organisational hierarchy was, however, most commonly experienced as a constraining factor that did not enable the freedom for officers to learn from their experiences and to develop in tandem with their colleagues.

The central or core theoretical category of the grounded theory of police officer decision-making was leadership, specifically the police supervisor’s ability to guide the formation of meaningful relationships and to promote reflective practice. Strong police relationships require clear communication, the establishment of a common purpose, and a collaborative stance. Once established, such relationships allow for the creation of a safe space in which officers can be encouraged to critically analyse their attitudes, beliefs, values, and decisions.

The transformation of the police culture into one based on trust and reflective practice is part of a trajectory of many years. The challenges that lie ahead are plenty – yet policing has been confronted with myriad barriers in the past. The sector has had to continually redefine itself and its tactics; innovative ways to respond to evolving crime and disorder have been generated and implemented. New ways to provide efficient service in the face of shifting external environments, evolving legal standards, and changing social expectations have been applied. Now, another reorientation of culture and internal operations is required in order to prepare policing for future trends of a working environment that is highly dynamic, interdependent and for which improvisation, critical thinking, and problem-solving are necessary pre-requisite skills. As one officer concisely stipulated:
Victoria Police or any police work is like no other job in the world police, you know ambos are similar, firies are similar but they’re not the same because they’re dealing with things over here - our job is like no other because we are dealing with people at their worst all the time. That’s why you see a lot of jaded police officers …
REFERENCES


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R v. Metropolitan Police Commissioner, ex parte Blackburn, 2 QB 118 (1968) (Austl.).


**APPENDICES**

*Appendix 1. Quality appraisal questions.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appraisal Questions</th>
<th>Quality Indicators</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is the research valuable?</td>
<td>Findings have presented new insights.</td>
<td>High(3) – Clearly stated relevance/importance of research supported by a literature review and discussion of limitations. Medium(2) – Relevance/importance is somewhat clear, limited review of literature and discussion of limitations. Low(1) – Relevance/importance not clear, no literature review. NA(0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How well does the research address its original aims/objectives?</td>
<td>Aims and objectives are clearly reported.</td>
<td>High(3) – Explicit and detailed aims/objectives to which findings are clearly linked. Medium(2) – Aims/objectives reported to a satisfactory level with limited ability to link findings. Low(1) – Unclear aims/objectives with no linkage made with findings. NA(0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there scope for drawing wider inferences?</td>
<td>Discussion of how findings may relate to wider theory.</td>
<td>High(3) – Explicitly discusses how findings relate to wider theory. Medium(2) – Limited application to wider theory. Low(1) – No acknowledgment of how findings relate to wider theory. NA(0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How justifiable is the research design?</td>
<td>Limitations discussed.</td>
<td>High(3) – Research design is explicitly justified and clearly meets aims of study. Medium(2) – Research design is somewhat justified and can be linked to some aims of the study. Low(1) – Research design is not justified or linked with aims of study. NA(0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Description of sample type provided.</td>
<td>High(3) – Sample is randomly selected. Medium(2) – Sample is systematically selected. Low(1) – Sample selection is opportunistic. NA(0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the sample selection appropriate and credible?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of sample type provided.</td>
<td>High(3) – Sample is randomly selected. Medium(2) – Sample is systematically selected. Low(1) – Sample selection is opportunistic. NA(0)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the research topic relevant?</td>
<td>Does the research focus on appropriate material?</td>
<td>High(3) – Research focuses explicitly on the specified topic. Medium(2) – Research focuses somewhat on the specified topic. Low(1) – Research does not focus on the specified topic. NA(0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent do the data collection tools allow for researchers to be free from bias?</td>
<td>How reliable are the data collection tools?</td>
<td>High(3) – Data collection method utilised standardised scales. Medium(2) – Data collection method utilised interview questions or surveys. Low(1) – Now new data collected. NA(0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How clearly has detail, depth and complexity of the data been reported?</td>
<td>Is the choice data analysis method appropriate?</td>
<td>High(3) – Extensive inferential analysis. Medium(2) – Some analysis undertaken, goes beyond description. Low(1) – Purely descriptive analysis. NA(0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Accumulative Score**

High: 19-27; Medium: 9-18; Low: 0-8
**Appendix 2. Differences across Glaserian and Straussian schools of thought.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Glaser</th>
<th>Strauss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Begin with an empty mind or tabula rasa, no literature review is to be conducted. Work from a position of naiveté and learn from the experts.</td>
<td>• Gaining insight into data through a literature review is acceptable, this allows for the formation of a lens through which the researcher approaches the data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The researcher studies an area of interest; a specific research question is not necessary. Trust that the participants will reveal their primary concern.</td>
<td>• State a research question.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Grounded theory is about concepts, not people. Transcription of interviews is not necessary. Private information is to be kept confidential.</td>
<td>• Interviews can be transcribed and this is recommended for novice researchers. Private information is to be kept confidential.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No interview guide is needed; theory emerges through the use of neutral questions.</td>
<td>• Semi-structured interviews are recommended; theory emerges through the use of structured questioning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Field notes can be used, as well as photos, news articles, historical documents, and other information that clarifies the concept.</td>
<td>• Observations of the participants can form part of the data but are subject to interpretation and should be clarified with the participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Theoretical sensitivity is sourced from immersion in the data; the researcher sorts and re-sorts memos until major concepts become clear.</td>
<td>• Theoretical sensitivity is sourced from the methods and tools utilised; computer programmers can also be used to aid this process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The study will result in a substantive theory that explains what is going on in the area of interest. Numerous theories can be identified from one study.</td>
<td>• The study will identify themes and concepts. Theories can also be developed from the data but this is not the necessary outcome.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Theory grounded in the data; credibility of theory derived from its grounding in theory. Detailed and dense process fully described.

• A basic social process ought to be identified.

• The researcher is a passive agent, exercising disciplined restraint.

• Coding is data dependent, a constant comparison of incident to incident with neutral questions, categories and properties evolving. Comparisons become more abstract, categories are refitted and frameworks emerge.

• There are two coding phases or types, simple (fracture the data then conceptually group it) and substantive (open or selective, to produce categories and properties).

• Theory interpreted by the observer (i.e., researcher); credibility of theory derived from the rigor of the method. Parsimony, scope and modifiability emphasised.

• A basic social process need not be identified.

• The researcher is an active agent, making decisions throughout.

• Coding is rigorous and defined by technique; the nature of making comparisons varies with the analytical coding technique chosen. Codes are derived from micro-analysis grounded in word-by-word examinations. Reduction and clustering of categories eventuates.

• Three types of coding, open (identifying, naming, categorising and describing phenomena), axial (the process of relating codes to each other) and selective (choosing a core category and relating other categories to that).
Appendix 3. Police officer decision-making interview guide.

Date / / Unique Code Identifier: ____

1. How many years have you been on the job?

2. When did you last attend Operational Safety Tactics Training (OSTT)?

3. Have you had any additional relevant training?
   - No [ ] Go to Question 4
   - Yes [ ] When did you undertake this additional training?
     Who was the training provider?

!! Please take a minute now to think about an incident in which a decision that you made was important to the outcome of the situation. The incident that you choose will be one that required you to make a quick decision, and that the decision you made was important to the outcome. Also, try and think of an incident that involved an offender whom you were familiar with.

4. In the incident that you’re thinking about, did your decision/s have a critical impact on the outcome of the situation?
   - No [ ] Take a second to think of another incident, one in which the decision/s you made was/were important to the outcome.
   - Yes [ ] Proceed to the Question 5

5. Please approximate when the incident occurred.

6. Did the incident involve death or serious injury?
   - No [ ] Proceed to Question 7
   - Yes [ ] Discuss if comfortable to discuss this with interviewer.
7 Did the incident affect you personally, such that you felt highly distressed by having experienced it?

No □ Proceed to Question 8

Yes □ Please choose another incident to ensure you do not re-experience the distress

8 Did the incident involve an offender you’ve dealt with previously?

No □

Yes □

!! Now that you’ve selected an incident, please take a few moments to describe how it happened. What were the events leading up to it? How did the situation unfold? When and how did you make your decision? What happened as a result of your decision?

Write out timeline.
When you made the decision described in Question 8, did you consider other options before choosing one?

No  Briefly describe in your own words how the decision you made came to mind.

Yes  What was/were the other option/s you considered?

Why did you reject this/these option/s?

Have you ever done something different or made a different decision in a similar incident?

No  Proceed to Question 11

Yes  What did you do differently?

Have you ever seen another officer do something different in a similar incident?

No  Proceed to Question 12
12. Do you think that at an earlier time in your career you would have made a different decision?

No. How would you describe/explain how you made your decision to a less experienced officer?

13. In a situation such as the one you described, what are officers trained to do/consider?

14. What experience do you believe was necessary for you to generate and evaluate the decision you made?
15 What training do you believe was necessary for you to generate and evaluate the decision you made?

16 Which would you say helped you more, training or experience?

17 What surprised you the most about the incident?

18 On a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 represents the lowest you’ve ever experienced and 7 the most you’ve ever experienced, how much time pressure was involved in making your decision?

19 If you had more time, do you think you would have chosen a different course of action?

No □ Briefly describe in your own words why more time would not have been beneficial.

Yes □ What would you have done differently if you had more time?
20 A list of words is presented below. Please rate each word on how much you experienced it during the incident. If the adjective definitely describes how you felt write “Agree”. If the adjective more or less describes how you felt write “Neutral”. If you do not understand the adjective, or you cannot decide whether it describes how you felt say “I Don’t Know”. If the adjective does not describe how you felt say “Disagree”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tense</th>
<th>Tired</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relaxed</td>
<td>Idle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restful</td>
<td>Uptight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active</td>
<td>Alert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprehensive</td>
<td>Lively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worried</td>
<td>Cheerful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energetic</td>
<td>Contented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drowsy</td>
<td>Jittery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bothered</td>
<td>Sluggish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uneasy</td>
<td>Pleasant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dejected</td>
<td>Sleepy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nervous</td>
<td>Comfortable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distressed</td>
<td>Calm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vigorous</td>
<td>Stimulated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peaceful</td>
<td>Activated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

21 Were other officers involved in the incident?

No  ☐  Proceed to Question 22

Yes ☐  How many other officers were involved?
What was your role?

Briefly comment on how the presence of other officers impacted on your decision. Would you have decided differently if you were working alone?

22 Were citizen bystanders present?

No □ Proceed to Question 23

Yes □ Imagine the same incident as it occurred, except there were no bystanders present. How would this have changed your decision?

23 What would you say was the most important piece of information that you used to make your decision? Why so?

How did you obtain this information?

24 How would access to more time and information have changed your decision?
The following section asks you to describe the characteristics of the offender. We understand that you may not remember all the details but try to answer the questions in as much detail as possible.

25 Was the offender male or female?

26 If you had to guess, what ethnicity would you say the offender was?

27 Could you approximate the age of the offender. If you cannot recall, would you classify him or her as young or old?

28 Could you describe the appearance of the offender? Things like height, build; anything you can remember.

29 Do you believe the offender was under the influence of alcohol or drugs?
   No ▶ Proceed to Question 30
   Yes ▶ What did the offender do/say to make you believe he or she was intoxicated?

30 Did you perceive the offender as dangerous?
   No ▶ Proceed to Question 31
   Yes ▶ How so?

31 Was the offender known to you prior to the incident?
   No ▶ Proceed to Question 32
Yes  Briefly describe the incident, prior to this one, in which you encountered the offender.

Do you believe you had more knowledge going in having met the offender previously? Why so?

Is there anything you would like to add?

!! Please take a minute to report on how you experienced this survey.
If your experience of this survey has been unpleasant in any way please contact the Police Psychology Unit on 9301 6900 or the Police Association on 1300 366 789.

On a scale of 1 - 4 (1; not at all, 2; a little, 3; quite a bit, 4; very much) how anxious are you feeling right now?

1 2 3 4

On a scale of 1 - 4 (1; not at all, 2; a little, 3; quite a bit, 4; very much) how distressed do you feel right now?

1 2 3 4

Thank you for taking part in the current study. Your participation is highly valued and appreciated!
EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

This information sheet is for you to keep.

Researcher: Innes Seric

Research Supervisor: Professor Stuart Thomas

Title: Police Officer Decision-Making in Stressful, Ambiguous and Potentially Violent Situations

Who is contacting me?

My name is Innes Seric and I am conducting a research project with Stuart Thomas, a Professor of Forensic Mental Health in the School of Psychology at Wollongong University, towards a Doctorate in Clinical Psychology at Swinburne University.

Why have I been contacted?

The researcher has contacted you as you have expressed interest in the current study and provided us with your contact details.

What is the purpose of this research?

The aim of this research is to develop a better understanding of how police officers make decisions in less than optimal situations. We will interview officers of various levels of experience working across Victoria and New South Wales to unravel what experience can tell us about skill development in decision-making. We will also consider the implications our findings have on training curricula. We hope that this will bring us closer to better understanding the police environment.

Who should not participate?

- There are certain exclusion criteria to participation in the current research including the following:
- Officers who are under any kind of investigation regarding a critical incident,
- Officers who have experienced ongoing effects or any psychological or emotional difficulty arising from an incident that is causing current distress or impairment, and/or
- Officers experiencing trauma symptoms or who have been diagnosed with trauma related disorders.

Why should I participate?

By taking part in this research you will contribute to an area of work that has been neglected previously. Work has been undertaken to understand decision-making in firefighting, aviation and other such contexts, however the importance of police officer decision-making has been somewhat overlooked. Given the extensive role of police officers in the community and the impact your decisions have on the resolution of encounters with the public we believe this area of research is highly important. We also hope that by partaking in this research you will contribute to shaping the future training of new recruits and ultimately improvement in police-community relations.

What do I need to be aware of?
Participants should be aware that Section 127A Police Regulation Act 1958, 'Unauthorised disclosure of information and documents' states:

“A person who is a member of police personnel must not access, make use of or disclose any information that has come into his or her knowledge or possession, by virtue of his or her office or by virtue of performing his or her functions as a member of police personnel, if it is the member's duty not to access, make use of or disclose the information.”

Participants should also note that Section 95 of the Constitution Act 1975 provides that a person employed in any capacity (whether permanently or temporarily) in the service of the State of Victoria should not:

(a) publicly comment upon the administration of any department of the State of Victoria;
(b) use except in or for the discharge of his official duties any information gained by or conveyed to him through his connection with the public service; or
(c) directly or indirectly use or attempt to use any influence with respect to the remuneration or position of himself or of any person in the public service.

What will I have to do?

We are looking for operational police officers with any level of policing experience to take part in a telephone or face-to-face interview lasting up to 60 minutes. During the interview you will be asked to recall the most recent incident that presented a challenge to you and in which your expertise was important OR where a decision that you made was critical to the outcome. You will be required to tell the interviewer all the events that occurred from the time the situation began to when it was deemed to be under control. During this time the interviewer will draw out a timeline of the situation and you will be asked a number of questions around this e.g., whether you considered other options and whether you had been in a similar situation previously. With your permission, the interview will be audio taped so as to allow us to analyse the data in more detail. Please note that confidentiality will be maintained.

Are there any risks if I choose to participate?

Given the nature of the situations that we will ask you to discuss you may experience some minor distress or discomfort. The researcher is aware of this and has put in place resources to ensure that any distress is dealt with appropriately.

Can I withdraw my consent to participate?

Being in this study is completely voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. However, if you do consent to participate you may only withdraw prior to the end of the interview. This is due to the fact that your information will be non-identifiable and the researcher will not be able to track down the interview recording once the interview has been completed.

What will happen with the information I provide?

All data collected will be non-identifiable, no names or locations will be recorded. Any published data will follow the same principles. The collected data will be analysed and written up in the form of several research articles. The researcher will endeavour to publish these articles in an appropriate journal.

Where will my information be kept?
Storage of the data collected will adhere to the University regulations and will be kept on University premises in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet for 7 year or 5 years following publication of results, whichever is later. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual police officers will not be identifiable in such a report.

Can I find out how the research turned out?

If you would like to be informed of the aggregate research findings or if you would like a copy of any of the articles, please contact Innes Seric on 0424 527 839 or iseric@swin.edu.au at the appropriate time.

Who should I contact if I feel distressed following the interview?

If you feel any discomfort or distress as a result of participation in the current research, please contact the Police Psychology Unit on (03) 9301 6900. They are able to provide confidential counselling referrals, advice, and crisis support and are contactable 24 hours a day. The Police Association (welfare officer) is also able to provide counselling and referral advice and can be contacted on 1300 366 789 during business hours or 0408 943 254 24-hours. Your GP can assist you in accessing Medicare subsidised sessions with a psychologist if required. Please be aware that both the researcher and/or yourself will need to get in contact with the Police Psychology Unit to ensure that if you have experienced any type of adverse reaction to the current project that you are in contact with appropriate services and are receiving adequate support.

If you would like to contact the researchers about any aspect of this study, please contact:

Professor Stuart Thomas,
School of Psychology, Wollongong University
Tel: +61 2 4221 4967 Email: stuart_thomas@uow.edu.au

Professor Michael Daffern
Centre for Forensic Behavioural Science
505 Hoddle Street, Clifton Hill, Victoria
Tel: +61 3 9947 2608 or 9947 2600 Email: mdaffern@swin.edu.au

If you have any complaint concerning the manner in which this research is being conducted, please contact:

Secretariat Research Coordination Committee
Corporate Strategy and Governance Department
Level 5, Tower 1 Victoria Police Centre
637 Flinders Street, Docklands, Victoria
Tel: +61 3 9247 3690 Email: research.committee@police.vic.gov.au

Research Ethics Officer, Swinburne Research
Swinburne University of Technology
PO Box 218
Hawthorn, Victoria 3122
Tel: +61 3 9214 5218 Email: resethics@swin.edu.au
Appendix 5. Consent form.

Consent Form

**Researcher:** Innes Seric  
**Research Supervisor:** Professor Stuart Thomas  
**Title:** Police Officer Decision-Making in Stressful, Ambiguous and Potentially Violent Situations

**NOTE:** This consent form will remain with the Monash University researcher for their records

I agree to take part in the Swinburne University research project specified above. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the Explanatory Statement, which I keep for my records. I understand that agreeing to take part means that:

I agree to be interviewed by the researcher.  
I agree to allow the interview to be audio-taped.

I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw at any stage prior to the end of the interview without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.

I understand that any data that the researcher extracts from the interview for use in reports or published findings will not, under any circumstance, contain names or identifying characteristics.

I understand that any information I provide is confidential, and that no information that could lead to the identification of any individual will be disclosed in any report or to any other party.

I understand that the interview will include a few questions regarding how I believe the interview went and whether I had experienced any discomfort at any stage.

I understand that data from the interview will be kept in secure storage and will be accessible to the research team. I also understand that the data will be destroyed after 7 years or 5 years following publication of results, whichever is later.

I understand that I may contact the researcher, Innes Seric, on 0424 527 839 with regard to any concerns I may have about my participation in this research project. Should you have any
queries concerning how this research is conducted please contact the Secretariat at the Victoria Police Human Research Ethics Committee on 9247 6756.  

Yes  No

I understand that if I feel any discomfort or distress as a result of participation in the current research I can contact the Police Association (welfare officer) on 9468 2600 during office hours or 0408 943 254 (24-hours). I understand that I can also contact the Employee Support and Welfare Services (Police Psychology) on 9301 6900 (24-hours).  

Yes  No

I agree to provide my member registration number to allow the researchers to locate any forms I may have completed following the incident I have discussed in the interview. I understand that the researchers would like to access any reports I have filed as a means of increasing the validity and accuracy of the data and overcoming some of the obstacles associated with human memory.  

Yes  No

Participant Name:

___________________________________________________________________________

Signature: ____________________________________              Date:________________
Appendix 6. Telephone interview consent script.

CONSENT SCRIPT FOR TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS

I am currently undertaking a Doctor of Psychology of Monash/Swinburne University (depending on whether the interview occurred prior or following the transfer of the course). We’re looking at how police officers make decisions in fast-paces situations.

If you agree to participate I will ask you a couple of generic questions about your experience. I will then ask you to think of an incident where you felt you had to make a quick decision. As you walk me through the incident I will draw up a timeline of the events. We’ll then pick a few points to focus on. The interview should take approximately 30-60 minutes.

Any information that you provide in this interview is kept confidential. All research materials will kept in a secure-locked cabinet at the Centre for Forensic Behavioural Science. The data will be destroyed five years following the submission of my thesis. All names, locations, ranks that you provide will be removed so that you cannot be identified so that no identifying information will be reported in any manuscripts or articles produced.

Given the nature of the incident/s you may choose to talk about, there is a risk that you may feel distressed by the interview. Remember that it is up to you to decide which questions you want to answer. You may provide brief answers or go into as much detail as you feel comfortable with. It is up to you. You can also choose to withdraw from the interview at any time.

Do you have any questions? Would you like to proceed? One last thing before we begin, you will find a list of contact numbers on the back paper of the Explanatory Statement. Should you have any comments or complaints about the current research please feel free to contact any of the listed numbers.
Appendix 7. MUHREC approval letter.

MONASH University

Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC)
Research Office

Human Ethics Certificate of Approval

Date: 15 January 2013
Project Number: CF12/3412 - 2012001636
Project Title: Law enforcement decision-making in stressful, ambiguous and potentially violent situations
Chief Investigator: Assoc Prof Stuart Thomas
Approved: From: 15 January 2013 To: 15 January 2018

Terms of approval
1. The Chief investigator is responsible for ensuring that permission letters are obtained, if relevant, and a copy forwarded to MUHREC before any data collection can occur at the specified organisation. Failure to provide permission letters to MUHREC before data collection commences is in breach of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research and the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.
2. Approval is only valid whilst you hold a position at Monash University.
3. It is the responsibility of the Chief Investigator to ensure that all investigators are aware of the terms of approval and to ensure the project is conducted as approved by MUHREC.
4. You should notify MUHREC immediately of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.
5. The Explanatory Statement must be on Monash University letterhead and the Monash University complaints clause must contain your project number.
6. Amendments to the approved project (including changes in personnel): Requires the submission of a Request for Amendment form to MUHREC and must not begin without written approval from MUHREC. Substantial variations may require a new application.
7. Future correspondence: Please quote the project number and project title above in any further correspondence.
8. Annual reports: Continued approval of this project is dependent on the submission of an Annual Report. This is determined by the date of your letter of approval.
9. Final report: A Final Report should be provided at the conclusion of the project. MUHREC should be notified if the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.
10. Monitoring: Projects may be subject to an audit or any other form of monitoring by MUHREC at any time.
11. Retention and storage of data: The Chief Investigator is responsible for the storage and retention of original data pertaining to a project for a minimum period of five years.

Professor Ben Canny
Chair, MUHREC

cc: Ms Innes Seric
Appendix 8. RCC approval letter.

1 October 2012

Associate Professor Stuart Thomas
School of Psychology and Psychiatry,
Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences
Monash University,
Centre for Forensic Behavioural Science
50th Mickle Street, Melbourne VIC 3058

Dear Stuart,


I write to advise you that the Victoria Police Research Coordinating Committee (RCC) has approved your request to undertake the above research involving Victoria Police.

This approval is conditional on:

• Approval by the Victoria Police Human Research Ethics Committee (VPHREC).
• The researchers amending the Recruitment Poster to reflect a more neutral scenario (for example a picture of a police division van).
• The inclusion of statements in the Consent Form and PLS that if a member suffers any discomfort or distress as a result of their participation, they should contact Police Psychology/Wellness, who can offer crisis appointments and referrals for counselling. The Police Association can also provide referrals for counselling. (Our members shouldn’t be directed to Life line or Men’s line in the first instance.)
• A caveat in the PLS form - that members should not be involved if:
  - they are under any kind of investigation for a critical incident
  - they have experienced any ongoing effects of any psychological or emotional difficulty arising from an incident that is currently causing distress or impairment
  - are experiencing trauma symptoms or have a diagnosis for trauma related disorders, and
• The Research Organisation signing a Research Agreement outlining the conditions governing the conduct of research involving Victoria Police.

You will need to ensure the completion of the Research Agreement and return it to Victoria Police before the research can commence. The Research Agreement will be forwarded to you electronically in due course. If you have any queries or require further clarification please contact the RCC Secretary on the contact details above.

Yours sincerely,

Dr David Raffel
Secretary, Research Coordinating Committee
Appendix 9. VPHREC approval letter.

2 April 2013

Innes Senic
Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences/School of Psychology and Psychiatry
Monash University, Clayton Campus
Centre for Forensic Behavioural Science, Paul Mullen Centre 505 Hoddle Street, Clifton Hill,
VIC 3068

Dear Innes,

Re: VPHREC 192/12 - Application to the Victoria Police Human Research Ethics Committee
for “Law Enforcement Decision Making in Stressful, Ambiguous, and Potentially Violent Situations”

Thank you for your recent application to the Victoria Police Human Research Ethics Committee
(VPHREC). Your application was considered by the committee out of session.

I am now in a position to advise you that your application has received formal approval for the
curation of the project, including any approved extension.

I draw your attention to the terms of the 'Declaration by researcher(s)' in your application, including
the following requirements:

- To provide progress reports to VPHREC by 30 June and 31 December each year for the
curation of the research project;
- To provide a final report and a copy of any published material at the end of the research
project, and
- To notify VPHREC in writing immediately if any change to the project is proposed and await
approval before proceeding with the proposed change.

If you have any queries or require further clarification please contact the VPHREC Secretariat on
the contact details above.

Yours sincerely,

Nathan Hernandez
Secretariat, Victoria Police Human Research Ethics Committee
Appendix 10. SUHREC approval letter.

To: Prof Michael Daffern/Ms Ines Seric, CFBS/FHAD

Dear Michael and Ines

**SHR Project 2014/070 Law Enforcement Decision-Making in Stressful, Ambiguous and Potentially Violent Situations**  
Prof Michael Daffern, FHAD; Ms Ines Seric et al  
Approved Duration: 01/04/2014 to 31/03/2018 [Adjusted]

I refer to your application for Swinburne ethics clearance for the above supervised student project transferred from Monash University to Swinburne.

Documentation pertaining to the request was contained in emails, with attachments, sent 21 February (I Seric to K Wilkins) and 20 March 2014 (M Daffern to K Wilkins, including clarification re project status). This documentation was put to a delegate of Swinburne’s Human Research Ethics Committee (SUHREC) for consideration significantly on the basis of the prior ethical review documentation and clearances issued. In this regard, information re the original clearances issued by Monash University (CF12/3412 – 2012001636), Victoria Police Research Coordinating Committee (VPRCC) (Letter dated 1 October 2012) and Victoria Police HREC (VPHREC 192/12 – clearance 2 April 2013 and email of 19 March 2013) was noted. Also of significance, in this instance, sensitive/personal/health information (as per applicable Privacy and Health Records legislation) is being secured within Victoria.

I am pleased to advise that, as submitted to date, Swinburne ethics clearance has been given prospectively for the project to continue in line with standard on-going ethics clearance conditions outlined below but see also the special notes below. SUHREC can be expected to ratify the clearance in due course.

**Special Notes:**

§ A copy of the updated/revised consent instruments referred to in the above email (M Daffern to K Wilkins) of 20 March 2014 should be forwarded as soon as practicable.

§ VPRCC and/or VPHREC may need to be apprised of the Swinburne ethics clearance here issued and note/endorse the revised consent instruments now to be used and note that previous participants would accordingly be or have been apprised of the project’s changed circumstances. Responsibility for previous clearances issued remain with Monash University, VPRCC and VPHREC (as applicable) and as regards researcher compliance with the clearances. Copies of subsequent clearances for the transferred/modified project should be submitted to the Swinburne Research Ethics Office as soon as practicable for the record.

**Standard Conditions**

- All human research activity undertaken under Swinburne auspices must conform to Swinburne and external regulatory standards, including the current *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* and with respect to secure data use, retention and disposal.

- The named Swinburne Chief Investigator/Supervisor remains responsible for any personnel appointed to or associated with the project being made aware of ethics clearance conditions, including research and consent procedures or instruments approved. Any change in chief investigator/supervisor requires timely notification and SUHREC endorsement.
The above project has been approved as submitted for ethical review by or on behalf of SUHREC. Amendments to approved procedures or instruments ordinarily require prior ethical appraisal/clearance. SUHREC must be notified immediately or as soon as possible thereafter of (a) any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants and any redress measures; (b) proposed changes in protocols; and (c) unforeseen events which might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.

At a minimum, an annual report on the progress of the project is required as well as at the conclusion (or abandonment) of the project. (Reports and requests made to VPHREC also being submitted to Swinburne Research for processing/endorsement may suffice.)

A duly authorised external or internal audit of the project may be undertaken at any time.

Please contact the Research Ethics Office if you have any queries about Swinburne on-going ethics clearance, citing the project number. A copy of this clearance email should be retained as part of project record-keeping.

Best wishes for the transferred project.

Yours sincerely

Keith

---------------------------------------------------------------------------------
Keith Wilkins
Secretary, SUHREC & Research Ethics Officer
Swinburne Research (H68)
Swinburne University of Technology
P O Box 218
HAWTHORN VIC 3122
Appendix 11. Recruitment email template.

Dear ____,

I am writing to you in regards to a research project that is currently being run in collaboration with Monash University and Victoria Police. The project is entitled Police Officer Decision-Making in Stressful, Ambiguous and Potentially Violent Situations and has received ethics approval from both Victoria Police and Monash University.

The aim of the research is to investigate the way in which police officers make decisions during incidents that are characterized by limited time. The researchers are presently recruiting operational police officers with any level of policing experience to engage in a 1-hour interview conducted via telephone. During the interview, participants will discuss an incident that they found challenging and in which their expertise or decision was important to the outcome. Participants will be asked a number of questions regarding the discussed incident (e.g., whether they considered other options and whether they had been in a similar situation previously) to allow the interviewer to gain a better understanding of how the situation unfolded.

With participant’s permission, the interview will be audio taped so as to allow us to analyse the data in more detail. Confidentiality will be maintained at all times. All data collected will be non-identifiable, no names or locations will be recorded. All published material including research articles and the thesis will follow the same confidentiality principles.

Taking part in this study is completely voluntary and there is no obligation to consent to participation. Participants who engage in the interview may only withdraw their consent prior to the ending of the interview. This is due to the fact that information will be non-identifiable and the researcher will not be able to track down the interview recording once the interview has been completed.

Should you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind Regards,

___________

___________
DECISION-MAKING RESEARCH WITH VICTORIA POLICE (Centre for Operational Safety)
Decision-making is a crucial aspect of working as a police officer. In the current research we are aiming to investigate the decision-making process that unfolds during fast-paced and dynamic situations. In particular, we are interested in what information you use to arrive at a decision.

LAW ENFORCEMENT DECISION-MAKING
THERE IS STILL TIME TO PARTICIPATE

WHAT DOES PARTICIPATION INVOLVE?
We are looking for operational police officers to take part in a face-to-face or telephone interview lasting up to 60 minutes. We have had a great response thus far and are hoping to collect some more data.

During the interview you will be asked to recall an incident in which your expertise was important or where a decision that you made was critical to the outcome. You will be required to tell the interviewer of the events that occurred. You will then be asked a number of questions e.g., whether you considered other courses of action and whether you had been in a similar situation previously. With your permission the interview will be audio taped to allow us to analyse the data.

All information provided will be kept private and confidential. No identifying information will be collected.

WHO TO CONTACT
If you are interested in taking part please contact the researcher, Innes Seric, on iseric@swin.edu.au
Alternatively, you can contact Senior Sergeant Vin Butera, Operational Safety Unit Police Academy on vin.butera@police.vic.gov.au
Appendix 13. Data analysis audit trail.

Audio-recorded interviews were transcribed using Microsoft Word for Windows and Audacity freeware. The verbatim transcripts were then imported into Nvivo version 10 for Windows.

Data reduction included the organisation of text data into an accessible and meaningful format. Data reduction included a process of selecting, focussing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the textual data (Miles & Huberman, 1994) into concise pieces of information.

Data reconstruction involved organising the reconstructed data so as to enable for conclusions to be drawn. Several NVivo tools were utilised (see data reconstruction examples that follow) to extrapolate from the data systematic patterns and interrelationships. At the reconstruction stage, higher order categories or themes emerges from the data that went beyond those first discovered by the initial process of data reduction.

Finally, data abstraction involved the putting together of the dissected textual data in a coherent and accurate thematic presentation of the analysed data (see data abstraction examples that follow).
Data Reduction: Examples of contact summary sheets.

**CONTACT SUMMARY**

Type of contact: **Face-to-face**: Male officer

Phone:

Meeting:

Site: [Redacted]

Date began coding: 18/12/2014

Pick out the most salient point in the contact. Number in order on this sheet and identify point in transcript. Attach theme or aspect to each point in CAPITALS. Invent themes when no existing ones apply and asterisk those. Comment may also be included in double parentheses.

**SALIENT POINTS**

1. Interestingly stated that training teaches you HOW to do things whilst experience teaches you WHEN to do things.

2. Middle management has authority over other units, the primary task is to coordinate and take charge. Middle management has authority over the on the beat officers, however lose this authority when seniors, detective or specialist units arrive.

3. The decision to check the house appeared to be made alone, there was some fear that the offender would be in the house and could threaten the safety of all those outside the property. ((What makes one think this way? Are all officers this alerted to threat?))

4. The previous experience of the offender and the beliefs the officer held about “Yugoslavs” may have led him to perceive the offenders as “extremely violent”.

5. The respondent is a trainer; this may have meant that the officer presented a more training/policy-based account of his decision-making. Maybe some of the knowledge he has gained from his current role as an instructor were applied in hindsight?

6. Respondent touched on welfare issues, the incident discussed led to a PTSD diagnosis and the officer ceasing operational duties. Support seemed to be in place.
CONTACT SUMMARY

Type of contact: Face-to-face

**Site:**

**Date began coding:** 12/12/2014

**Phone:** Male officer (__________)

Pick out the most salient point in the contact. Number in order on this sheet and identify point in transcript. Attach theme or aspect to each point in CAPITALS. Invent themes when no existing ones apply and asterisk those. Comment may also be included in double parentheses.

SALIENT POINTS

1. He was very irritable and brief with me during the initial stage of the interview process, he made several comments to this effect.

2. The officer described an extensive history working in emergency services - these experiences have clearly impacted his attitude and perception of others, he advocates for strict discipline and attempted to recruit me for the military.

3. One-man police stations were identified as being disparate to other rural stations. The officer's station is his home. The resource implications are also greater; the officer is dealing with incidents that typically take him hours away from his region. ((Who deals with issues that arise when he is absent? Does he try and resolve situations as soon as he can to get back to the station to be available should anything else arise?))

4. Some reference to not having access to telephone and having to use satellite and the impact this has on communication. This technology theme was not coded as it has not been replicated in other interviews, may be particular to the one man rural station
CONTACT SUMMARY

Type of contact: Face-to-face: Male officer
Phone: 
Meeting:

Site: 
Date began coding: 19/12/2014

Pick out the most salient point in the contact. Number in order on this sheet and identify point in transcript. Attach theme or aspect to each point in CAPITALS. Invent themes when no existing ones apply and asterisk those. Comment may also be included in double parentheses.

SALIENT POINTS

1. The importance of surroundings highlighted e.g., loudness of music, glass on floor, small spaces.

2. Presence of weapon played the most fundamental role in the decisions the officer made, the fact that the weapon was produced unexpectedly in a small space appeared to induce a sense of shock. Assumed that “someone would have gotten stabbed”, ((why? Did the suspect’s ethnicity have a role to play in that?))

3. Discussed the paradox of accountability – the decision he made would have been criticised later yet the training/organisation had not provided an excepted standard of behaviour in this type of incident.

4. Adrenalin/emotional reaction diminishes over time/experience? Maybe the physiological reaction or does the psychological reaction also change?

5. Officer left Vic Pol to work as a manager of a medium-size cooperation, he describes this experience as being essential to his ability to think in terms of “bigger picture” terms.

6. Theme of justification and scrutiny was commonly discussed. ((I wonder whether the officer thought more about these issues given his experience in management positions and the level of responsibility he was held to.))
Data Reconstruction: Example of NVivo tools used (coding stripes).

Coding stripes are coloured bars that show how the content is coded. Coding stripes can be used to see the content that is coded at particular nodes, coded at nodes with particular attribute values or coded at nodes belonging to a particular set of search folders. The below image depicts an example of the coding stripe tool used to see the content that is coded at particular nodes.
Data Reconstruction: Example of NVivo tools used (sets).

Sets are a flexible way of grouping sources or nodes. Items placed in a set are references or shortcuts to the original items. The below image depicts one set created in the current thesis and illustrates the convenience of using sets to organise project items into groups. Many sets were temporarily used to collate similar material pertaining to particular questions and were deleted when they were no longer required.
Data Reconstruction: Example of NVivo tools used (memos).

Memos are a type of document that enable the researcher to record the ideas, insights, interpretations or growing understanding of the textual data. They provide a way to keep the analysis separate from the text that is being analysed. The following is an example of the memoing undertaken to construct the concept of situational ambiguity.

**SITUATIONAL AMBIGUITY**

**Suspect Characteristics**

**Mental illness** – communication, engagement

- *ID 120 cannot code for strategy as suspect deceased before strategy implemented*

Why do I talk to you when you have a mental illness?
- To establish common ground, “fishing for some engagement/rapport
- Fear of escalation

Why do I use a hand on approach?
- Can’t communicate
- Weapon presence = RISK

Hands on approach when barrier between officer and suspect 1

Hands on approach when insufficient distance present between officer and suspect 3

Somewhere in between 2

Can’t really comment on whether the presence of a physical barrier and a hands on approach particularly in regards to self-harm incidents.
I have been wondering whether my work as a psychologist has impacted how I feel and how I have interpreted the way in which police officers have described their interactions with persons presenting with mental health difficulties. My professional role is one that includes empathy and the provision of support and intervention, at times this has clashed with the views of the officers. I have been mindful of these experiences and have been observant of instances wherein I have identified that I may be imposing or comparing my understanding of mental health difficulties with that of the officers. As part of this I have discussed these thoughts with my supervisors and referred back to the training that officers receive in terms of mental illness. In this way I feel that I have been able to segregate my world view from that of the one the officers are exposed to.

**Drug affected** – OSTT equipment/hands on

ICE and physical violence discussed by IDs 32, 27, 25, 35, 32,

**Demeanour → Risk (Relationship)**

What factors are considered in assessment of demeanour?

What differentiates between approachable and violent?

Interview IDs 111, 112, 117, 118, 120, 121, 123, 128, 135, 139 did not discuss a specific suspect so excluded.

Interview IDs 114, 116, 124, 125, 137, 138 did not describe suspect’s demeanour so excluded.

Matrix code query: Demeanour (row), escalation, interpersonal violence and self-harm (columns)

**Escalation characteristics:**

- Wasn’t cooperating
- Defensive/ambivalent about police
- Not entirely reckless
- Aggressive
- Judges not be an imminent threat
- Lability
- Verbal exchanges/abusive
- Normality?

**Interpersonal violence characteristics:**

- Threats
- Weapon/objects as weapons
- Volatile
- Aggressive to police/already violent
- Space/rapid reaction?

**Self-harm characteristics:**

- Emotional
- Non-rational
- Impulsive
**Threat → Strategy (Relationship)**

Do strategic decisions vary according to type of threat?

Self-harm IDs 105, 109, 132, 134

Matrix code query: Escalation, interpersonal violence and self-harm (row) and backup, communication, hands on, OSTT, specialist services, space and distance (columns)

Escalation – disengage by creating space, call for back up or specialist services

Interpersonal violence – engage physically

Self-harm – engage physically, may try communication (very few data points)

---

**Weapon → Threat (Relationship)**

What is the effect of weapon focus on information processing?

Analytic v heuristic decision-making/information processing? This is what existing literature would suggest. Must be careful not to impose this knowledge on the data.


Decision-making in presence of weapon:

- Only option “I told him if he kept coming I’d shoot him” (IDs 102, 104)
- Intuitive “wasn’t even thought about” (IDs 104, 107)
- Memory? “not sure how long it took, it seemed like a long time”
- Alertness/imminence
- The aftereffect, “what if __”

**Novelty ➔ Intuition (Relationship)**

- Try to plan

- Complexity limits time for planning

- Intuitive processing ➔ difference between junior/senior members, junior members told what to do and don’t have many examples to draw on. Senior members have many examples that blur into one generalised “gut feeling”

But how do novices make decisions?

ID 114 – joint decision with partner, can’t recall similar situation, treat it as a regime, training taught to keep distance/options

ID 116 – assist senior (culture), no previous similar experience, procedural/training (not really reality but it helps), command

ID 120 – shock/life preservation

ID 121 – some previous similar experience but previous incident “easier” “more information” “more planning”, training (not exactly reality but it helps), partner

ID 123 – some previous similar experience, procedural/training

ID 134 – procedural/training

ID 137 – back senior (culture), no previous experience

ID 138 – no previous experience, safety principles taught in training

**Third Parties ➔ Complexity**

*Ambulance officers*

ID 102 – concern/risk to ambos, “highly vulnerable”

ID 103 – “watch their backs”, protection

ID 118 – stress for them

ID 119 – time waiting, communication style

ID 121 – presence of ambos can get on with policing work

ID 123 – standard involvement

ID 127/129 – need ambos for specialised knowledge

ID 132 – disagreement

ID 136 – have to help ambos/safety, specialised knowledge
ID 138 – specialised knowledge, can’t resolve without ambos, physical health
ID 140 – waiting for ambos

= PROTECTION/GET ON WITH POLICING TASKS

Police Officer

I have responsibility to injured party

Injured party

Police Officer

I have responsibility to ambos

Injured party

Ambos

Ambos have responsibility to injured party

Ambos

Ambos have responsibility to injured party

Police Officer

I have responsibility to find suspect

Suspect

I have responsibility to ambos

Injured party

Police Officer

I have responsibility to injured party

Injured party

Police Officer

I have responsibility to ambos

Ambos

Ambos have responsibility to injured party
Public bystanders

ID 102 - “extremely distressed”, family members tried to interfere, a lot of people in the area, risk

ID 105 - engaged neighbour in incident resolution

ID 106 - primary concern to secure victim

ID 109 - sister present but kept away from incident

ID 110 - mother present but kept away from incident

ID 113 - mother got “agro” “fired up” “dad was there and he was trying to calm his wife down”

ID 115 - car pursuit, depends on “people, the road, the traffic”

ID 118 - large cordon area “I’m also watching all the people around there”, suspicion

ID 119 - other people there but “fair way away” look for bystanders, incooperate into risk assessment “you’ve got to look at where they are in relation to what you want to do”, “if there’s 10 people standing behind you that all cop it as well it makes it worse”, “we’ve got to think of something else”.

ID 121 - “it was a street full of people obviously watching” “how much are they helping?”

ID 123 - “there’s obviously witnesses hanging around there and they all go OK, the police are here they’ll sort it out now”, expectation, “everyone’s looking at me, I can’t sort of stand there and be in shock”

ID 125 - OC spray considered, how many people it would effect “if you put spray in the air”.

ID 126 - backup option, “not the time to do this myself and you’ve got 1,000 onlookers”

ID 128 - prevent bystanders from seeing the scene, cordon the area

ID 129 - bystanders assisted restraint of offender

ID 131 - suspicious of general public witnesses, are these the offenders?

ID 133 - safety of bystanders

ID 138 - information sources from bystanders

ID 140 - potential for family members to be involved, had to diffuse the situation

= SAFETY CONCERNS/ASSISTANCE/BURDEN
**Victim**

ID 104 – information
ID 106 – safety/protection
ID 111 – safety/protection
ID 118 – suspicious
ID 121 – inconvenience/need to support
ID 124 – safety/protection/support, “the victim’s the most important person”
ID 128 – safety/protection/support
ID 129 – safety/protection/support
ID 135 – safety/protection/support, kids as victims most challenging?

Should I merge victim with public bystanders? Similar themes.

**Partner**

- Experience: trust in partner related to their level of experience. There is a high level of confidence in more experienced officers such that they are almost expected to make the right decisions.
Data Reconstruction: Example of NVivo tools used (memo links/see also links/annotations).

Memo links, see also links and annotations stored ideas or thoughts relevant to particular segments of text. The below image depicts one example where annotations, a see also link to a journal article and a memo link facilitated the construction of ideas and thoughts.
The considerations are the likelihood of other people being injured.

So you listed a number of options there that sort weren't really available, have you ever been in a similar situation and done something differently?

I've never had... that's the only time I've ever had a pursuit with two cars going in opposite directions, but no it's generally because I was controlling the pursuit that's what I'd do. Basically it's a safety first thing. Safety for everyone involved. Members, um public, other road users. You got to give consideration to the time of day, is anyone going to be around traffic conditions, weather conditions, all that sort of stuff.

All that was going through your head. One decides to go east, one decides they're going to go west. How did you decide which you would follow?

The traffic was on [names road]. I wasn't controlling the whole thing.
Data Reconstruction: Example of NVivo tools used (queries).

NVivo queries offer a flexible approach to exploring the data, they enable the research to gather a quick and simple sense of what is happening the data in order to build a more focussed perspective. There are several kinds of queries that can be conducted in NVivo, the ones utilised in the current project included text search query (finding all occurrences of a particular work, phrase or concept), word frequency query (find the most frequently occurring words or concepts), coding query (find all content coded at selected nodes or a combination of nodes) and matrix coding query (find a combination of items and display the results in a table). The images displayed below depict examples of each of the identified queries in respective order.

Text Search Query (using terms spray, capsicum, OC, foam)
Word Frequency Query (50 most commonly used words containing at least five letters).
Coding Query (content coded at combination of ‘training’ and ‘operational reality’ nodes)

Reference 1 - 1.00% Coverage:
Well they would say that, they would say you shouldn't be in a situation where she is that close. I'm just the problem is, is where she was here there was really no sort of...if it had of been a 5 foot guy that was away from the [inaudible] I wouldn't have gone down to the bathroom.

Reference 2 - 0.35% Coverage:
I mean twice a year we do GIST training so I personally don't think I've used any of the things.

Reference 3 - 1.22% Coverage:
I can't say oh this training, training's taught me to be calm in this situation. I can't personally, because they don't like that, they're trying to teach you how to react when someone attacks you and that and overall that's good but I don't think it should in some circumstances no matter what you do it's going to get there.
Matrix Coding Query (Frequency of various themes discussed across rural and urban officers).
Data Reconstruction: Open coding node tree.
Data Abstraction: Example of axial coding (theoretical memos).
Data Abstraction: Example of theoretical coding (theoretical memos)

![Diagram showing the relationship between uncertainty, reduce, thrive, hierarchy/control, and social leadership.](image-url)