Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.
Policing New Zealand: Perspectives of Rural and Urban Police Officers

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Psychology at Massey University, Albany, New Zealand.

Corinne Elizabeth Fowler
2008
ABSTRACT

This thesis presents an exploration into rural and urban police officers' perceptions and experiences of their work in Northland, New Zealand. Although international research has already investigated police officers' rural and urban experiences, there is a lack of similar literature in New Zealand. The only studies conducted within the New Zealand Police (NZP) have resulted in contradictory data, creating a debate about whether there is a difference in policing rural and urban areas. A study by Winfree and Taylor (2004) into whether the perceptions of NZP staff differed in rural, small town or metropolitan areas found little difference between either the NZP personnel themselves, or their perceptions of policing. This contrasts with research by Jaeger (2002) and Goddard and Jaeger (2005), who explored not only policing but also the strategies utilised within the roles. Goddard and Jaeger proposed that there are significant differences between officers in rural and urban areas.

The current research attempts to resolve this debate, exploring both rural and urban perspectives through the use of Grounded Theory. Interviews with 16 police officers based in the Northland District were conducted to capture the essence of their experiences. Seven key categories emerged: community, job role, management, safety, the judicial system, police culture, and family and personal life. These were placed under the core category of 'Boundaries'. It emerged that rural officers found it difficult to implement boundaries due to their isolation and need for a working relationship with the community. Urban officers, however, described how the implementation of boundaries enabled them to work effectively in their environment. Consequently, this research found that there is a difference in the rural and urban policing experience, supporting the findings of Goddard and Jaeger (2005).

It is hoped that the individual themes and overall findings from this research will stimulate further investigation into the experience of policing. While it only explored one New Zealand Police District, the information contributes to a deeper understanding of police perspectives and experiences.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the following people for their contribution to this thesis:

The New Zealand Police supported this project, and I am grateful to all the police officers that gave their time and were interested in being interviewed, with a huge appreciation to one officer in particular whose ongoing assistance has enabled the research to be completed without too many obstacles.

Thank you also to my two supervisors, Mei Wah Williams for her advice, and John Buttle for his ongoing support, encouragement and patience.

Finally, I would like to say thanks to my family and friends, who have supported and encouraged me throughout this time. A special appreciation goes out to my editors, Judy, Stephen, Catherine, Jae and Mo.
CONTENTS

Abstract i
Acknowledgements ii
Table of Contents iii
List of Tables v

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION ........................................... ..................................................... 1
1.1 OUTLINE OF THE PRESENT STUDY .................................................. 1
1.2 CHAPTER OVERVIEW ......................................................... 1
1.3 THE ROLE OF THE POLICE ......................................................... 2
1.4 POLICE: GENERAL OVERVIEW .................................................. 4
1.5 INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH ...................................................... 12
1.6 NEW ZEALAND RESEARCH ...................................................... 23

CHAPTER TWO: SETTING THE SCENE NORTHLAND DISTRICT POLICE ............. 26
2.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW ......................................................... 26
2.2 A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE NEW ZEALAND POLICE ............. 26
2.3 NORTHLAND POLICE DISTRICT .............................................. 30

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY ......................................................................................... 32
3.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW ......................................................... 32
3.2 PARTICIPANTS ......................................................... 32
3.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .................................................. 39
3.4 RESEARCH PROCEDURES .................................................... 42

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS ...................................................................................................... 55
4.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW ......................................................... 55
4.2 POLICE PERCEPTION OF COMMUNITY RELATIONS ............. 55
4.3 POLICE PERCEPTION OF THEIR JOB ROLE ............. 62
4.4 POLICE PERCEPTION OF MANAGEMENT ............. 78
4.5 POLICE PERCEPTION OF SAFETY ............................................. 81
4.6 POLICE PERCEPTION OF THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM .......... 89
4.7 POLICE PERCEPTION OF POLICE CULTURE ............. 94
4.8 POLICE PERCEPTION OF PERSONAL AND FAMILY LIFE .......... 101
4.9 BOUNDARIES: CORE CATEGORY ............................................. 107

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION ................................................................................................. 109
5.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW ......................................................... 109
5.2 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS .................................................. 109
5.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE PRESENT STUDY .................................. 115
5.4 STRENGTHS OF THE PRESENT STUDY .................................. 116
5.5 IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .................................. 116
5.6 CONCLUSION ......................................................... 118

REFERENCES 120
APPENDICES

Appendix A: Massey University Human Ethics Committee Approval Letter 132
Appendix B: Letter sent to the District Commander Superintendent Rikard, Northland District 133
Appendix C: Research Information Sheet sent to District Commander Superintendent Rikard, Northland District 134
Appendix D: Letter received from District Commander Superintendent Rikard 135
Appendix E: Letter sent by Assistant Commissioner Howard Broad regarding Conducting Research in the New Zealand Police 136
Appendix F: Research Application Process Flowchart 138
Appendix G: Letter sent to Inspector Mitchell, Auckland City 139
Appendix H: Letter from the Research and Evaluation Steering Committee 140
Appendix I: Letter sent to District Commander Superintendent Rusbatch, Northland District 142
Appendix J: E-mail sent to Potential Participants 143
Appendix K: Information sheet 144
Appendix L: Consent form 146
Appendix M: Social demographics form 147
Appendix N: Interview Prompts 148
Appendix O: Thank you e-mail to Participants 149
Appendix P: Analysis Table: Core Social Process 150
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Gender of Participants ................................................................. 33
Table 2: Age of Participants ................................................................. 33
Table 3: Ethnicity of Participants ............................................................. 34
Table 4: Marital Status of Participants .................................................... 34
Table 5: New Zealand Police Rank of Participants ..................................... 34
Table 6: Participant's Length of Service in the New Zealand Police .......... 35
Table 7: Participant's Length of Service at Present Station ...................... 35
Table 8: Number of Officers working in the Participant's Present Station ..... 36
Table 9: Participants On-call Duty .......................................................... 36
Table 10: Participant's Urban or Rural designation of their Previous Station 36
Table 11: Participant's Length of Service at Previous Station .................... 37
Table 12: Gender of Participants compared to the New Zealand Police Sworn Staff Population .... 37
Table 13: Ethnicity of Participants compared to the New Zealand Police Sworn Staff Population and the New Zealand Population ..... 38
Table 14: Rank of Participants compared to the New Zealand Police Sworn Staff Population ........ 38
Table 15: Example of Transcription Table .............................................. 50
Table 16: Example of Secondary Coding Analysis Table ........................ 52
Table 17: Example of Third Level Coding Table ..................................... 52
Table 18: Example of Verbatim Summary Coding Table ........................ 53