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## Reducing risk and injury to transit officers

Christine Teague  
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# **Reducing Risk and Injury to Transit Officers**

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**M.Sc. (Environmental Science)**

**This thesis is presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy**

**Faculty of Education and Arts  
Edith Cowan University**

**2012**



## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines whether an understanding of the communication and safety culture of transit officers, who form part of a security section of a large state Rail Transport Organisation (RTO), can lead to strategies to reduce their risk of injury. The core functions of the transit officer position are passenger safety and customer service. This puts the officers in the front line of defence against the anti-social behaviour from some patrons that occurs regularly on the railway system. Like urban railways the world over, this anti-social behaviour can range from bad language to severe violence. Whilst these officers are not police, they do have many similar powers to police, such as the ‘power of arrest’ to deal with certain offences committed on railway property. A key difference, however, is that transit officers tend to deal with issues as they arise, whereas the police are more likely to respond to an event after its occurrence. Additionally, unlike many policing organisations, transit officers are not equipped with a taser or firearm, but rely on their communication skills and physical training to defuse a potentially threatening situation, and a baton and pepper spray for self-defence.

Over the years an unacceptable number of injuries have been sustained by the RTO transit officers in dealing with anti-social behaviour. Whilst the organisation requires that statistics for incidents and injuries remain confidential, it is nonetheless known that the incident rate is above that of workers in other traditionally hazardous industries, such as construction. Further, surveys conducted on behalf of the RTO also indicate that passengers feel less safe at night due to the anti-social behaviour evident on the rail system. This raises issues about the safety culture.

The term ‘safety culture’ became important in safety science as a result of accident enquiries, analysis of safety failures and organisational disasters which attributed fault to the organisation’s internal attitudes to safety. Many of these organisations had comprehensive safety systems in place; however these investigations identified the importance of human factors in the equation. Safety systems did not mean that the organisation had a culture of safety. To study the culture of a group it is necessary to understand their basic assumptions, espoused values and the artefacts that the group holds as important. These play a significant

part in determining people's behaviour, their adherence to safety procedures and communication in the workplace. In terms of the safety culture on the RTO trains, transit officers have commonly said that anyone wanting to understand the provocation and violence that they deal with in their work environment would need to work alongside them. This research responds to that challenge to understand the cultural and communication dynamics that exist within the transit officer cadre and in exchanges between passenger and transit officers.

An ethnographic protocol was chosen, which in this instance involved the researcher participating directly in the workplace and building close relationships with the transit officers. Recognising the significance of obtaining 'insider status' the researcher commenced the fieldwork by joining a new intake of transit officers embarking upon the twelve-week training program. Importantly, taking this path enabled the researcher to obtain credibility amongst the transit officers through their shared experiences. Following graduation from training, the researcher spent a further month in the closed circuit television monitoring room obtaining an overview of the many activities involving transit officers that occur during the night throughout the metropolitan rail system. From this communication heart, the Shift Commander can communicate directly by radio with all transit officers; and the video operators can monitor activities from cameras which are situated on all railway infrastructure.

The researcher spent the following four months immersed in the transit officers' world. This included working alongside the officers during the evening and night, being rostered on their shifts and engaging with the variety of their duties on trains, stations and delta vehicle patrols. The information gleaned during this time became the basis of the formal interviews which took place at the end of that period.

The researcher later met with 'best-practice' transit policing organisations to determine what strategies these organisations had in place to reduce rail officer injury rates. The collaborating organisations included transit policing agencies in the United States, Canada, Britain and interstate Australia. Information obtained during the RTO field work was evaluated against safety practices and the safety culture in these high performing organisations. Recommendations to reduce the risk of injury for transit officers and improve communication practices within the transit officer cadre were subsequently submitted to the industry partner for consideration.

A safer workplace for transit officers would reduce transit officers' personal suffering, leaving more transit officers at work, reducing workers' compensation costs, and providing a safer environment for passengers.

## DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

- (i) incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;
- (ii) contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or
- (iii) contain any defamatory material.

Signed:

*C. C. Teague*

Date:

*14/11/2012.*



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A number of other people contributed to my assimilation within the transit officer unit. These included the RTO trainers who oversaw my metamorphosis from a manager to a transit officer and the RTO supervisors on the various rail lines, who treated me as just another transit officer. This played an important role in my gaining acceptance as a member of the transit officer team. Although I cannot name you personally, you all know who you are. Thank you.

This research resulted from a tripartite agreement between the Australian Research Council, Edith Cowan University and a State Government Transport Organisation. I am indebted to you all for the funding to undertake this research, the University for the support it has given me along this journey, and to the transport organisation's Chief Executive Officer, Executive Members, and managers at both the corporate and security levels, who provided me access to undertake the transit officer training and to work on the tracks.

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Many rail transit policing organisations worldwide have contributed to this research, sharing with me their strategies to tackle crime on their rail system, reduce injuries and incidents for their officers, and increase safety for their passengers. Importantly, these organisations were willing to share the training programs they have in place to equip their officers for the tasks they undertake.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ABSTRACT .....</b>	<b>I</b>
<b>DECLARATION .....</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....</b>	<b>V</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS.....</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>DEFINITIONS .....</b>	<b>XIII</b>
<b>ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS .....</b>	<b>XV</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1. Introduction .....	1
1.1 My Interest in the Research Topic .....	2
1.2 Background to the Research .....	3
1.3 Significance of the Research.....	6
1.4 Research Process.....	9
1.5 Structure of Thesis .....	14
1.6 Summary .....	16
<b>CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>	<b>17</b>
2. Introduction .....	17
2.1 Night Time Economy .....	17
2.2 The Use of Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) in Public Places .....	19
2.3 Organisational Culture .....	21
2.4 Safety Culture .....	26
2.5 Communication.....	34
2.6 Training .....	37
2.7 ‘Best-practice Management’ in Law Enforcement Agencies .....	38
2.8 Summary .....	41
<b>CHAPTER THREE: METHOD.....</b>	<b>44</b>
3. Introduction .....	44
3.1 Research Aim .....	46
3.2 Significance of the Research.....	46
3.3 Ethnographic Research .....	47
3.4 Ethical Considerations .....	54
3.5 Process of Fieldwork.....	56
3.6 Summary .....	65

<b>CHAPTER FOUR: TRAINING .....</b>	<b>67</b>
4. Introduction.....	67
4.1 Gaining Entry to the Training .....	69
4.2 Introduction to the Organisation .....	71
4.3 Rail Safeworking Qualifications .....	76
4.4 Radio Operation .....	81
4.5 Use of Force .....	82
4.6 Legal Studies .....	88
4.7 Customer Service .....	93
4.8 Graduation.....	94
4.9 Summary .....	96
<b>CHAPTER FIVE: CENTRAL CONTROL MONITORING ROOM .....</b>	<b>97</b>
5. Introduction.....	97
5.1 Commencing in the Control Monitoring Room .....	98
5.2 Overview of the CCTV System .....	100
5.3 Observing Night Life on the Rail System .....	102
5.4 Transit Officer use of the CCTV System.....	111
5.5 Summary .....	115
<b>CHAPTER SIX: ON TRACK .....</b>	<b>117</b>
6. Introduction.....	117
6.1 Transit Officer Role .....	124
6.2 Transit Officer Duties.....	126
6.3 Role Ambiguity .....	142
6.4 Maintenance .....	146
6.5 Equipment .....	150
6.6 Supervisors .....	151
6.7 Communication .....	156
6.8 Use of Force .....	164
6.9 Statistics .....	175
6.10 Summary .....	181
<b>CHAPTER SEVEN: BEST PRACTICE IN TRANSIT POLICING ORGANISATIONS .....</b>	<b>183</b>
7. Introduction.....	183
7.1 Field Training Officers.....	186
7.2 Supervisor Training.....	188

7.3	Key Performance Indicators.....	191
7.4	‘Broken Windows’ Theory .....	194
7.5	Behavioural Safety Program .....	195
7.6	‘Best-practice’ Communication .....	198
7.7	Benchmarking .....	208
7.8	Summary .....	209
<b>CHAPTER EIGHT DISCUSSION .....</b>		<b>211</b>
8.	Introduction .....	211
8.1	Leadership .....	217
8.2	The Organisations’ Attitude to Blame .....	221
8.3	Learning Organisation.....	224
8.4	Communication .....	227
8.5	Employee Involvement .....	230
8.6	Summary .....	232
<b>CHAPTER NINE CONCLUSION .....</b>		<b>234</b>
9.	Introduction .....	234
9.1	Subsidiary Research Questions .....	234
9.2	Limitations of the Research .....	239
9.3	Recommendations for Further Research.....	240
9.4	Implications for Practice .....	241
9.5	Summary .....	242
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>		<b>243</b>
<b>APPENDIX 1: INFORMATION LETTER .....</b>		<b>258</b>
<b>APPENDIX 2: CONSENT FORM.....</b>		<b>260</b>
<b>APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.....</b>		<b>262</b>
<b>APPENDIX 4: PUBLIC TRANSPORT AUTHORITY REPORT .....</b>		<b>263</b>



## DEFINITIONS

Accredited person	A rail transport operator who is accredited under the <i>Rail Safety Act 2010</i> . It does not include any person whose accreditation has been surrendered, revoked, or otherwise not effective ("Western Australia Rail Safety Act," 2010)
Boom gates	Barrier arms either side of a railway crossing that descend across the road to prevent vehicles entering the level crossing when a train is approaching.
Competence*	The possession of defined skills and knowledge, and the application of them to the standards required to safely and efficiently perform work.
Crank handle	A rigid metal lever which when correctly inserted into the points motor enables the operator to manually move the points' blades.
Crank the points	The manual operation of points, using a crank handle to move the blades and set the desired route for the train.
Delta vehicle	A form of van with two way radio, emergency light and siren, and a separate enclosed back area where a person under arrest can be placed in safe custody.
Human factors*	The scientific discipline that is concerned with the application of information about human characteristics, capacities, and limitations to the design of human tasks, machines, machine systems, and environments.
Just culture*	An occurrence-investigation environment which acknowledges human error and encourages honest reporting of errors while establishing clear accountability for deliberate or culpably negligent actions.
Occurrence*	A general term for accidents and incidents which lead to injury or loss, or which are considered by the responsible authority to have the potential to compromise safety.
On or near the track	Means three (3) metres from the edge of the closest rail when measured horizontally and at any level above or below the rail when measured vertically, unless in a position of safety (National Transport Commission Australia, 2004, p. viii).
Pantograph	A hinged metal rod which conducts the electricity to drive the rail car from the overhead electrical power lines to the rail car.

Points	Heavy moveable blades which change the direction of a train from one track (road) to the next. Point blades are operated either by hand or by electric points motors (Public Transport Authority of Western Australia, 2007b, p. 13).
Rail safety worker*	A person performing or responsible for safety-related work, be that person a paid member of the staff of the railway, a contractor, subcontractor or an employee of either, or a volunteer.
Risk	The combination of the frequency or probability of occurrence and the consequences of a specified hazardous event (National Transport Commission Australia, 2004, p. ix).
XYZ/XYZies	Transit officer name for revenue protection officers. They wear similar uniforms to transit officers, but deal mainly with fare evasion. They do not have transit officer powers. They have an observe and report role only.

\*Australian Standard AS 4292.1-2006 Railway safety management. Part 1: General requirements.

## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ARA	Australian Rail Association
ARC	Australian Research Council
ARTBU	Australian Rail Tram and Bus Union
CCTV	Closed circuit television
CEW	Controlled electrical weapon
CMR	Central monitoring room
EMU	Electrical multiple unit ie. Two or more rail cars semi-permanently coupled together and not normally uncoupled in service, having a driving cab at each outer end of the pair.
EAP	Employee assistance program
HSE	Health and Safety Executive Britain
IFRS	Incident fault reporting system
JSA	Job safety analysis
NYPD	New York Police Department
OC	Oleoresin capsicum spray
ORR	Office of Rail Regulation
OSH	Occupational safety and health
RCMP	Royal Canadian Mounted Police
RISSB	Rail Industry Safety and Standards Board
RTO	Rail Transport Organisation



# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Learning is a process of ‘becoming’  
(Heslop, 2011, p. 327)

This research was supported by a tripartite agreement between Edith Cowan University the Australian Research Council (ARC) and a State Government Transport Authority, which will be referred to as the ‘Rail Transport Organisation’ (RTO). It was funded through a national competitive ARC Project Grant. The research involved an ethnographic investigation into the safety and communication culture of transit officers working in the RTO (Australian Research Council, 2005). From the findings of the investigation, the study sought to examine whether an understanding of the safety and communication elements of transit officer culture could provide opportunities for improving their safety. The RTO transit officers, whose core functions are passenger safety and customer service on the railway system, are in many ways similar to police, although their powers are limited to the environs of the rail system. The transit officers form part of the security arm of the Train Operating Division of the RTO. The Train Operating Division (TOD) is itself a division of a large multi faceted transport organisation. After the field work was completed, and following receipt of a final report of the research outcomes and recommendations, the RTO chose to withdraw from the tripartite agreement. Consequently, outcomes of this research and the recommendations do not reflect the views of the organisation. The research team remains grateful to the RTO for their initial support of the project, and for their facilitation of the research. Whilst all the activities referred to in this project are an accurate account of the research, pseudonyms have been used throughout the study to protect the identity of all persons who have contributed to the outcomes.

This chapter will document the background and will provide an overview of the research project, as well as providing an outline of the structure of this thesis.

## **1.1 My Interest in the Research Topic**

My interest in the occupational safety of transit officers began during the years I worked in a fairly senior corporate management position within the RTO. Although my position had a responsibility for occupational safety and health within the organisation, I had no influence or input into the security area. The security section of the RTO was run as a discrete entity, in isolation from the rest of the organisation. I had no knowledge of what contributed to an incident occurring, what risk assessments may or may not have been completed, or any steps that may have been taken to mitigate any risk of injury. At that time, whilst I was aware that management was concerned about the rate at which the injuries occurred, management thought that these injuries resulted from ‘the nature of the job’. I found this situation difficult to accept, and wanted to learn more about the transit officers’ work and what contributed to an incident taking place.

Over the years the injury rate of transit officers has continued unabated. This led to the RTO executive commissioning this research, to gain in-depth information that might help reduce the rate of injury. The RTO executive at that time were also interested to learn from ‘best-practice’ transit policing organisations worldwide, especially as to how those organisations minimise the risk of injury to their officers. The tripartite linkage grant provided the finance for a PhD student to undertake the research, including a comparatively long period of international travel. I was successful in obtaining the scholarship grant, and resigned from the RTO to commence the PhD research.

As a beginning ethnographer, my only concerns starting out on this research related to my management background, plus being an older female. I felt these factors could impede transit officers’ acceptance of my presence amongst them. I was also conscious of the need not to let my management thinking cloud any research outcomes, but to interpret how transit officers themselves construct their culture. I was unfamiliar with the training undertaken by the transit officers, the duties they perform, and their rostering arrangements; and whilst I knew the management of the area, I did not know the officers themselves. When I eventually returned to the organisation as a trainee transit officer, about to begin a twelve week immersion course like other trainees, it was all unfamiliar and I was starting from scratch. Raeithal (1996, p. 320) aptly describes the process I embarked on:

The application of ethnographic methods to work research, then begins by our viewing each work group or organisation as a culturally alien community whose world-model and practices we must reconstruct from the utterances and situated actions of the working persons.

The problems I anticipated occurring during the research, such as acceptance by the transit officers, did not turn out to be well-founded. However, other issues materialised which I had not expected to occur. For example, security managers were reluctant for me to work on track with the transit officers, citing 'safety concerns' and saying that 'the timing is not right'. There was also a lack of understanding from my previous peers as to why I chose to spend all my time with the transit officers. Finally, the transit officer trainers assumed I was there to assess their performance. Nevertheless, the problems I encountered had one big advantage: the more difficulties that were placed in my way, the greater was my acceptance by the transit officers as one of them.

## **1.2 Background to the Research**

Initially when I commenced the research, the RTO had four main rail lines operating from the city to outer suburbia. During the process of the research, a fifth line was completed and commenced operating on the system. This new line was the longest of them all and triggered a major recruitment drive. Transit officers are allocated to a team servicing one of these five lines and work out from the team's home base. Home bases are located at the end stations on each line. Transit officer rosters can include working at their home base station, or at other main stations along their route, some of which may also be bus transfer stations. Officers can also be allocated to a station that is known to be busy at a particular time during their shift; or be asked to undertake train riding duties; or ride in the 'delta vehicle' patrol. Delta vehicle patrol is where officers patrol the line in a vehicle similar to a secure police wagon, providing additional support if and when required, transporting arrested individuals to the police lockup, and monitoring any unmanned stations along the rail line. Generally the transit officers work in pairs, and are responsible for customer service and safety of the passengers on the stations, platforms and trains on their particular line. A further group of transit officers are assigned to a team based at the main security office in the central city station. They service that station and the underground stations in the central city area.

Similar to other transport organisations worldwide, the RTO experiences anti-social behaviour by some passengers which can range from bad language to severe violence and, as Dickson and Bevan (2005) identified, violence is a daily occurrence for some railway employees. Transit officers form the front line of deterrence against this anti-social behaviour, and can often receive injuries themselves when dealing with such situations. These officers work mainly at night, when the anti-social behaviour is more prevalent as passenger demographics change from the workday commuters to those following mainly recreational pursuits (Teague, Green, & Leith, 2010a). If transit officers are to keep passengers safe, they need to remain safe themselves. A transit officer who becomes injured when dealing with a violent, alcohol or drug affected offender, becomes unable to provide protection for passengers (Teague, et al., 2010a).

The RTO is committed to ensuring that passengers feel safe on the train network at all times. Nevertheless, exposure to anti-social behaviour on the trains, stations and platforms can leave passengers feeling worried about travelling at night, as demonstrated by the RTO passenger satisfaction surveys (Public Transport Authority of Western Australia, 2011, p. 29). These indicate that people who feel safe travelling by rail during the day feel less safe at night. This reduced sense of safety and security is also fuelled by local newspaper and television companies giving extensive publicity to any negative event that may occur on the night-time rail system. Headlines include, for example, “Safety on trains ‘a sick joke’” (Spencer & Sadler, 2006, March 22, p. 51), and “Train travel gets more dangerous” (Spencer, 2009, July 11 p. 17). Camera footage of an assault in or around a station can be shown on television, while the broadcast media may also carry an interview with an assault victim. These add to passengers’ disquiet.

Previous passenger concerns led to a state government election promise in 2001 (Western Australia Legislative Council, 2009b, [Hon Ed Dermer to Minister of Transport Hon. Simon O'Brien]), that every train leaving the city after 7pm would have two transit officers on board. However, a shortage of transit officers, in spite of repeated recruitment drives, has meant that this promise has not materialised (Teague, et al., 2010a). Even so, as previously discussed in Teague and Leith (2008b), the RTO has taken a number of steps to deal with the challenges resulting from the anti-social behaviour of some patrons. Measures adopted include: closed



circuit television cameras (CCTV) located on all RTO stations, platforms and trains; 'real' time monitoring of the cameras on stations and platforms; the installation of emergency phones on all platforms; ticket barriers at most stations; an organisation-wide comprehensive occupational health and safety system; a detailed transit officer induction training course and yearly retraining in certain components of the course; plus high levels of patrolling by transit officers at night. These security initiatives have been supplemented by the introduction of revenue protection officers dressed in a uniform which is similar to transit officers'. The additional number of revenue protection officers gives the appearance of a greater presence of transit officers. The responsibilities of the revenue protection officers, however, are confined to ticket checking and the issuing of fines. Revenue protection officers are specifically instructed not to get involved in any disturbance, but to maintain a position of 'observe and report' only. This is substantially different from transit officers who have extensive training for their law enforcement role, which includes the 'power of arrest' for offences committed on railway property (Public Transport Authority Western Australia, 2006).

In spite of all the above measures taken by the organisation, violence and anti-social behaviour by patrons still occurs. This was recently emphasised by the Hon Ken Travers, Shadow Minister of Transport who stated in Parliament:

I believe this area is so important that we should set up a parliamentary committee to look at the issue of security on our public transport and how we can make it safer and better for the general community going forward because I do not think any of us should accept that the level of violence on our public transport is acceptable. On certain rail lines and certain bus routes, the level of violence is simply unacceptable (Western Australia Legislative Council, 2011c, p. 1).

The RTO wished to keep statistics for transit officer incidents and injuries confidential. However, Spencer (2009, July 11 p. 17) in an article published in the West Australian "Train travel gets more dangerous", obtained some statistics under the *Freedom of Information Act 1992* ("Freedom of Information Act (WA)," 1992), which highlighted the increase in violent attacks both on commuters and transit officers. These statistics are discussed further in chapter six. Following that newspaper article, questions were raised in parliament regarding the violence and anti-social behaviour on the rail system. This resulted in incident statistics being

presented in parliament which are discussed later in this thesis. Many of the violent episodes can escalate from simple triggers such as fare evasion, over-crowding or passengers exhibiting more demanding behaviours as a result of 'alcohol, drugs, mental health or anti-social behaviour' (Dickinson & Bevan, 2005, p. 41). As has been previously discussed in Teague and Leith (2008a), the research also identified that frustration with ticket vending machines being out of order, or change machines out of change, can also lead to incidents of violence from the travelling public which can result in a transit officer being injured. As Stan, one of the experienced transit officers, said:

If you've got someone who has got nothing to lose, they've got nothing to lose and they know it, they just keep going. A lot of the ones that are really at rock bottom, they have nothing to lose, are quite happy to get locked up, and go to jail because they'll be given three square meals a day, they'll be given a lot of care. And in a lot of cases I know, I think I've come across two from memory, situations, they wanted to get locked up to go and visit their relatives in jail for Christmas.

A number of transit officer injuries occur during an arrest, even though officers are trained in arrest procedures, commonly referred to as 'baton and handcuff' training. However, unlike many police agencies that arm their officers with tasers and/or guns, RTO transit officers do not have the use of these armaments. The transit officers have to rely on the use of their communication skills to command respect and control a situation, as well as sometimes needing to use their physical skills in arrest procedures. Additionally, they have the use of pepper spray and batons to defend themselves. However, transit officers do not command the same respect from the public as afforded to police, with a small minority of the passengers referring to the officers as 'Wanna Be Cops', 'Failed Cops' or even 'Transit Pigs' and worse (Teague & Leith, 2008a). Even so, transit officers are more likely to face violence than police officers, as transit officers deal with situations as they arise, whereas police are usually called to an event after its occurrence.

### **1.3 Significance of the Research**

There is an absence of specific studies relating to transit officers, however the nature of the job is in many respects similar to police officers, which over the years has claimed the attention of many researchers. This interest in policing has generated a significant amount of research examining issues such as police culture

(Chan, 1997; Crank, 2004), or specific aspects of their culture (Metzger, 2004; Reuss-Ianni, 1983); the use of force by the police (Aveni, 2000; Butler & Hall, 2008; Smith & Alpert, 2000); and the impact of closed circuit television cameras have on police practice (Goold, 2003, 2004). Previous police investigations have identified the existence of a strong subculture of informal occupational norms and values, generally obscured by rigid organisational hierarchical structures (Chan, 1996; Manning, 1978). This project has benefited and built on the factual and interpretive findings of a range of research projects investigating the culture of law enforcement officers.

Schein (2004) has previously argued, that the importance of understanding an organisations' culture cannot be over emphasised. Culture forms the framework for all beliefs and practices that take place within a work group (Schein, 2004). Although transit officers do not undertake the full range of duties required of police, nevertheless their law enforcement role predisposes them to similar cultural traits. These traits are triggered by issues such as: the dangers officers face both physically and mentally (Fridell, Faggiani, Taylor, Sole Brito, & Kubu, 2009); alienation from the public because of their law enforcement role, leading to social isolation (Waddington, 1999); solidarity amongst their ranks (Fielding, 1994) and a quasi-military organisational structure (Crank, 2004). This thesis differs from previous research, however, in that it examines whether an understanding of the communication and safety culture of transit officers, might provide opportunities for reducing their work-related injuries.

When they examined the literature on violence in police/citizen interactions, Fridell et al., (2009), found there was a strong correlation between agency aggressiveness and community relations. The more aggressive the agency behaviour, the worse the relations. Departmental aggressiveness can be conveyed by overt and covert signals which can impact upon officers' culture, and their attitudes to the use of violence in the field. Fridell et al., (2009) identified the lack of research examining violence against law enforcement officers, and the impact of agency communication policies to this area of operation. As Fridell et al., (2009) argued, those responsible for safety recommendations for police officers failed to examine this phenomenon.

In other industrial environments' safety cultures have been investigated from many perspectives (M. D. Cooper, 2000; Hale, Guldenmund, van Loenhout, & Oh, 2010), with the importance of safety communication practices also highlighted (Angiullo, 2009; Reason, 1997). Some accident investigation research has also examined communication practices following major disasters. In these events, a breakdown in communication processes was often identified as a contributing factor to the incidents occurring (Hopkins, 2005; Westrum, 2004). Leith (2008), however, identified that existing research on communication practices was mainly from a management perspective. When he undertook an ethnographic study into safety communication practices with employees in an Australian refinery, he found that management and shop floor employees held different understandings of safety.

Recognising that managers and employees may have different perspectives upon safety, and different safety cultures, this thesis seeks to answer the following question: 'In what ways can an understanding of communication and safety culture provide opportunities for improving the safety of transit officers?' This research will investigate whether the transit officer safety culture and communication practices contribute to violence against the officers in transit officer/citizen interactions, and whether a knowledge of the safety culture and communication practices could lead to a reduction in transit officers' work-related injuries. To date, this understanding has been lacking. This research will also examine the two-way safety communication flow between management and transit officers and whether such a flow may contribute to the development of a positive safety culture and reduced transit officers' injury rates.

The findings of this thesis have the potential to significantly reduce the injury rate of transit officers, resulting in benefits for the health and wellbeing of the officers and contributing to academic knowledge on the impact communication can make in this area. It may also reduce workers' compensation payments; the medical and rehabilitation costs for the rail transport organisation, and offer an increased sense of security for passengers. These changes would make rail transport a more attractive travel option, with the potential benefit of a reduced transport carbon footprint. Although the ethnographic findings are limited to one particular rail authority, the study has implications for rail authorities globally. This analysis of the research findings, together with information gathered from 'best-practice' agencies

worldwide, resulted in RTO's management being presented with a range of recommendations to reduce transit officer injuries. These recommendations may have value for all transit law enforcement agencies nationally and internationally.

## **1.4 Research Process**

Before the research began, transit officers would argue that any person who truly wished to understand the violence with which they are regularly confronted would need to work alongside them. I quickly realised the best way to do this was to become one of them. Whilst the proposal for the linkage grant funding this study predetermined that an ethnographic method of research would be used, the choice of ethnographic approach was left to my discretion. It was up to me to decide which group of workers to study, and under which circumstances. Ethnography originated in the practice of anthropology, where a researcher would immerse themselves for a considerable period of time in the community they wished to study. Traditionally these were first nation communities and they were often located in remote areas. The three main methods of conducting ethnographic research involve direct overt observation, covert observation and participant observation. The differences between these various forms of ethnography are discussed in further detail in chapter three. Choosing to commence this research by becoming a trainee transit officer, however, meant that I also chose the research approach of participant observation. In this epistemology, the research is undertaken from within the community to be studied, as a result of the researcher becoming an integrated member of the society being observed, whilst openly declaring their motive for joining this particular group of people (Bernard, 2000).

Over the past two decades researchers have shown an increased interest in the use of ethnography beyond the anthropological arena. It has now been adopted as a methodological approach by researchers investigating new concepts in work and employee practices (Hodson, 1998; Monaghan, 2004; Orr, 1996; Tope, Chamberlain, Crowley, & Hodson, 2005). In the safety field, however, researchers traditionally advocate the use of safety surveys as the most suitable means of assessing safety culture. The validity of this survey method has, however, been questioned by researchers such as Holmes and Gifford (1996) and, a few years later, Glendon and Stanton (2000), Guldenmund (2000), again Guldenmund (2007) and more recently Antonsen (2009). These authors argue that surveys measure people's perceptions of

what occurs, rather than what actually takes place in the workplace. Instead of survey methods, these researchers recommend the practice of ethnography as providing a more authentic picture of the safety culture of a group. Nevertheless, ethnographic research is time consuming, so few studies have been available. It is only in recent years that participant observation has been adopted as a valid method for investigating safety culture in a workplace (Brooks, 2005; Leith, 2008).

As a result of choosing participant observation as the research approach for this study, I was able to view the culture as an ‘insider’. Starting with an embryonic stage of membership on the first day of the twelve week compulsory training school, where assumptions, values and beliefs begin to develop, I went on to complete the training and become a transit officer team member on the railway line. I learnt how new recruits were socialised into the transit officer cadre, and was able to experience from their perspective the development of the culture that was unique to these officers. As Van Maanen (1978b) found, in terms of the police force, the development of a policeman’s work personality begins in the officers’ classroom. Later, working alongside transit officers on the railway system, I was able to note the subtle, and in some situations marked, changes in practice and in attitudes, that took place once transit officers left the training environment and needed to adapt to the work culture on their particular rail line.

Training can be described as the process of acquiring the knowledge, skills and attitudes which equip a person to competently perform the tasks that are required for their position (Salas & Cannon-Bowers, 2001). Taking this path as a rookie trainee enabled me to compare training with practice, and helped me determine whether changes in training could possibly improve work safety for transit officers. One of the requirements of the ARC Linkage Grant had been to report findings to the RTO management, with recommendations for possible improvements in training. As Dennis one of the trainers later informed me during my interview with him, none of the trainers go on track. Once the trainees leave the classroom, the trainers do not see them again until they return for ‘baton and handcuff’ refresher training, usually a year later. Whilst this trainer acknowledged the benefit that a supervised track-work induction would have, the trainers were not in a position to offer this. The RTO was accredited as a training organisation to deliver training under the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), but the actual delivery of training was contracted

out to a provider company. The current research identified a number of changes in the training which could possibly enhance the safety of transit officers. Although the RTO did not accept the findings of the study, transit offices themselves continue to view these areas as opportunities for improvements. As previous researchers have found, differences in perception around what constitutes safe practice may reflect the different roles of management and employees (Leith, 2008; Orr, 2006).

On completion of the transit officer training course, I wished to accompany my fellow trainees in being allocated to a particular line to begin the next stage of my career as a transit officer. However, management was reluctant to facilitate this process, raising concerns regarding my safety on the rail system at night. An interim compromise was reached where I would spend time in the closed circuit television (CCTV) monitoring room, thus seeing what happened at night on the railway system, but not participating directly in events. This CCTV area is where operators can view in 'real time' the images transmitted by the cameras located on stations, platforms and railway infrastructure and alert the shift commander to any problem developing. This is also the control centre for a first response to an incident, such as a fight, or a passenger pressing an emergency button on a station. The shift commander keeps a watching brief from the back of the room ready to respond immediately to any incident that may develop, such as relocating transit officers to provide back up support for colleagues should that appear to be called for.

I spent four interesting weeks in the CCTV monitoring room viewing the workings of the railway system at night, and watching the many problems that confronted my transit officer colleagues. Whilst I had not anticipated including this step in the research process, it provided a wealth of background information. All the staff there endeavoured to answer any questions I raised, and were eager to tell me about the problems they encounter. They explained the stressful nature of their job watching transit officers having to deal with traumatic events. Such events include witnessing suicides on track; watching and hearing transit officers 'in trouble' until the arrival of backup support; and violence between passengers. During the time I spent in the CCTV room monitoring trackside activities, there was a suicide on the track, another attempted suicide from an overhead bridge, an attempted knifing of a passenger, *melées* between and within family groups, a fall off the platform and graffiti vandalism, amongst other issues.

Witnessing these events unfolding on CCTV monitors did not discourage me from going on track with the officers. Instead, it provided me with an understanding of some of the stressful issues that transit officers face which could contribute to their safety culture. However, watching CCTV footage from afar did not provide me with the understanding of the transit officer safety and communication culture required by the research. Consequently, I negotiated further with the security management and eventually gained permission to join the officers 'on track'.

During the four months I worked with the transit officers on the lines, I gained a broad perspective of the transit officers' safety culture and communication practices across all areas of the system. It became evident that, similar to police culture, there were specific cultural traits common to transit officers across the whole rail system (Chan, 1996; Crank, 2004). On the other hand, there were also differences in the subcultures and communication practices of the transit officer teams reflecting the specific experiences and attitudes related to each of the five discrete but interconnecting railway lines. Passenger demographics changed from line to line, with two of the lines in particular servicing lower socio-economic areas. These factors did not appear to influence desirability of working on the line. Transit officers were very protective of their line, each team believing their passengers and their line were the best, with officers often reluctant to change lines even when there were promotion opportunities. They did not want to leave the closely knit team to which they belonged. This line loyalty resulted in some lines having more experienced officers than others.

The time I spent on track with the officers informed the questions I later asked during the 41 voluntary 'in-depth' interviews conducted with transit officers, supervisors and managers. The interview phase was scheduled at the conclusion of the field work. Interviews were taped, and were later transcribed and analysed for consistent themes. Quotes taken from the interviews are used extensively throughout the thesis to highlight communication practices, and traits within the officers' safety culture, such as the meanings ascribed by transit officers to specific issues and events.

Having obtained this 'insider view' from the training, the analysis of my field work and interviews, I was able to compare the RTO transit officer safety and communication practices with 'best-practice' transit law enforcement agencies interstate and overseas. I wanted to learn from these organisations the systems and



practices they have in place to achieve their high performance. The lessons learnt provided resources and transferable ideas to help the RTO improve their communications, training, and above all to embrace and demonstrate that safety is an organisational core value. Through this research I learnt about the compstat paradigm (Henry, 2003), a management theory on accountability which is widely used in best-practice organisations; how agencies subscribe to the ‘broken window’ theory, where small things are taken care of before they turn into bigger issues (Kelling & Coles, 1996); plus issues such as the communication and scenario training that their officers undertake; along with how all incidents are investigated to determine the contributing factors, together with how the results are actioned and communicated to all relevant parties to prevent a reoccurrence. The findings from these organisations contributed to the recommendations submitted to the RTO management for their consideration to improve transit officer communication and safety culture (see appendix 4). The process I adopted to identify which agencies I considered to demonstrate ‘best-practice’ to contact and visit, is discussed fully in chapter 7. These included transit law enforcement agencies in America, Canada, Britain and Australia.

As this thesis argues, through an understanding of the transit officer safety culture and a thorough examination of the communication practices of not only the transit officers themselves, but the supervisors and managers, successful strategies can emerge that reduce the safety risk officers face daily. Additionally, in examining the successful training, practices and procedures put in place by high achieving transit law enforcement agencies, a comparison can be made to the RTO’s practices and procedures. This exercise analyses and identifies the gaps. The generosity of these high achieving agencies in sharing their information allowed successful strategies that have been used in best-practice agencies to be recommended to the RTO management for their consideration.

This project adds valuable research to the existing body of evidence on communication and safety culture in law enforcement agencies, particularly for those positions not employed directly by law enforcement agencies, such as the position of transit officer, or in some countries and jurisdictions called special constables, and addresses a critical gap in the literature around the impact of communication practices upon violence against officers.

## **1.5 Structure of Thesis**

This thesis is divided into nine chapters, however, it does not follow the classic structure of a thesis. Rather than one chapter containing all the evidence, here the research evidence is spread over four separate chapters (chapters 4 – 7). These chapters relate to different stages of the researcher's immersion in the transit officers' world. Additionally, to facilitate a better understanding of the complex transit officers' working environment, chapters four to seven incorporate a mixture of findings, discussion and references to the literature.

This chapter (chapter 1) provides the reader with information concerning my interest in the topic, the background to the project, the significance of the research, and an overview of my research journey.

Chapter two focuses on the relevant literature. The literature used to inform the thesis covers a number of domains. This reflects the current lack of integration between the various elements relevant to the study. For instance, this research examines whether external environmental factors may contribute to the prevailing safety culture of the officers, such as the 'night time economy', or the use of CCTV in public places. Organisational culture is also important, as is the specific literature on the culture of law enforcement officers, safety culture, communication, training and 'best-practice' management in law enforce agencies. As Crank (2004) argues, without having an understanding of the culture of police officers, any reform process to bring about change will be thwarted.

Chapter three discusses the ethnographic methodology used in this research and in particular, the requirements of participant observation. This was the form of ethnography chosen as yielding the best means of developing an accurate picture of transit officer communication and safety culture. The chapter also examines the ethical considerations taken into account before embarking on the field work. The overall research question is documented, and broken down into a further four sub questions. The process and method used for each step of the field work is fully documented and explained.

Chapter four is written in a different voice to the other chapters. This chapter describes my gradual metamorphosis from being a manager prior to my enrolment in the PhD through the trainee process to eventually become a transit officer. The

chapter describes my training, firstly as a trainee transit officer, and secondly my personal journey as a doctoral student engaged in the research process. Schein (2004) advances the view that a shared history is necessary for a culture to develop. While the new transit officers were all strangers to one another at the commencement of the training, with no developed culture, this was to emerge over the course of the twelve weeks. My enlistment in training provided me with a clean slate to observe how the culture of law enforcement officers begins to germinate in the classroom, defining who they are. This has been previously suggested by researchers such as Van Maanen (1988), and Kleinig (2000).

Chapter five provides an overview of the time I spent in the CCTV monitoring room. Whilst this step was not part of the original research plan, it was added into the research at the insistence of the RTO management. It provided a useful overview of the rail system at night, and introduced me to some of the issues transit officers have to cope with.

In Chapter six I describe the role of the transit officer, and the duties they undertake, using many examples of incidents that occurred during the time I spent on track with the officers to illustrate certain points, and highlight cultural traits. I explore the areas that may contribute to their experiences of work-related injury such as the equipment provided; less than adequate maintenance of railway infrastructure such as cameras; supervision; communication, including both two-way management/transit officer communication, and transit officer/passenger communication; plus the use of force in undertaking their role. I conclude the chapter with an analysis of relevant statistics that are available in the public arena.

Chapter seven is devoted to the knowledge I gained from visiting the ‘best-practice’ transit policing organisations. As a result of my research, I had a number of areas that I wished to explore with these high achieving transit law enforcement agencies. The focus areas included training of the transit police officers, and their use of field training officers once the trainees graduated and left the classroom; the training of supervisors; and the use of key performance indicators for each level of management. I learnt about the ‘broken window’ theory (Kelling & Coles, 1996) that these agencies subscribe to, and a behavioural safety program that one of the agencies has in place. I examined the communication process in these agencies from many perspectives. Communication practices investigated include: interagency

communication; internal communication within their own organisation; the communication the organisations have with their communities; and the interpersonal communication between officers and passengers. I complete the chapter by discussing the benchmarking processes occurring between these agencies.

In Chapter eight I discuss my research findings, and review these findings in line with the component factors identified by the Rail Industry Safety and Standards Board (2010) which, when addressed and combined with good communication, are designed to produce a culture of safety within an organisation.

Chapter nine, the final chapter of this thesis, draws together the findings of this research project, and outlines some of the difficulties faced in undertaking the research which may have limited the value of the research outcomes. This chapter also provides recommendations for the RTO management which, if dealt with, may reduce the risk of injury for transit officers. The research project concludes with recommendations for future research in this area.

## **1.6 Summary**

My thesis argues that an understanding of the communication and safety culture of transit officers can lead to improvements in their incidence of work-related injury. To achieve this, however requires a number of changes that are outside the transit officers' control. Instead, the injury rates experienced by transit officers can be partly attributed to political constraints, financial constraints and a militaristic management structure, located within a bureaucratic organisation where priorities lie in the 'on time running' of trains, and keeping passengers happy, rather than providing an optimal safety environment for front-line transit employees.

## **CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2. INTRODUCTION**

This research embraces a number of domains within a range of literatures, the context of which are referred to throughout the documentation of this study. However, this chapter provides an overview of the areas of literature used which have contributed to the research background, and highlights areas where little or no previous relevant research was identified; for example the specific work role of the transit officer. In this situation, attention was paid to literature surrounding the culture, role and training of police officers. The literature relating to the field of ethnography is excluded from this section as it is discussed in detail in the following chapter.

The structure of this chapter includes material dealing with:

- the night time economy;
- the use of CCTV in a public places;
- organisational culture;
- culture of law enforcement officers;
- safety culture;
- communication;
- training; and
- ‘Best-practice’ management in law enforcement agencies.

#### **2.1 Night Time Economy**

The transit officers, who are the subject of this research, work predominantly at night. Similar to other night time workers in security or policing roles, they may be called on to deal with the anti-social or violent behaviour of individuals, often caused by the over consumption of drugs or alcohol. These potentially disorderly people form part of what Hobbs, Hadfield, Lister, and Winlow (2003) label, ‘the night time economy’; or as Melbin (1978) refers to it, a ‘frontier’, where lawlessness

and violence are present. This anti-social behaviour, usually occurring at night in public places for example stations and public transport, can leave members of the public feeling fearful of unprovoked violence from a stranger (Bannister & Fyfe, 2001; Bromley, Thomas, & Millie, 2000; Hobbs, et al., 2003; Homel, Tomsen, & Thommeny, 1992). However, there are individuals in broad categories of occupational positions employed to deal with such anti-social behaviour. Relevant roles range from that of the volunteer dealing with drug or alcohol affected individuals (T. Cooper, Love, & Donovan, 2007) through security officers, sometimes referred to as 'quasipolice' or 'para police' (Manzo, 2010), or 'bouncers' (Chaney, 1998; Homel, et al., 1992) with no particular legal powers to deal with violent situations at one end of the spectrum, to police, who have full powers of arrest at the other end (Chan, 1997; Crank, 2004; Reuss-Ianni, 1983). Transit officers do not have all the powers that police officers do, for instance transit officers do not carry guns or tasers, and their legal powers are restricted to the rail system. However, compared to security personnel who do not receive the training that transit officers undertake (Manzo, 2010; Prenzler, 2004; Prenzler & Sarre, 2004), the transit officers' role and responsibilities more clearly reflect the duties undertaken by police officers. Additionally, transit officers on the rail system have similar powers of arrest to police officers for specific offences, whereas the rights of licensed private security personnel are restricted to making a citizen's arrest which are subject to legal restrictions, including criminal law, the use of force and deprivation of liberty (Prenzler, 2004).

Alcohol consumption is a routine pastime in Australian culture and, at night, regularly takes place in pubs and clubs, where entertainment is often provided to attract consumers. These venues frequently advertise various drink promotions, for example: 'happy hour', where drinks can be purchased at half price during that time; or they promote 'two for one' offers, where two drinks can be bought for the price of one. These offers encourage high levels of drinking and possible drunkenness within a short period of time (Homel, et al., 1992; Prenzler, 2004). Previous research conducted by Hobbs et al., (2003) found that central to this night time communal ritual of alcohol consumption within young groups, lies their rite of passage to peer approval and group status (Hobbs, et al., 2003). Anti-social behaviour, including violence, disorder, criminal damage, vandalism and noise is not

confined to the surrounds of the drinking premises where the activities take place, but also impacts on exit routes from the city, which would include the use of public transport, and which can be the sites of further disorder (Bromley & Nelson, 2002; Hobbs, et al., 2003).

Previous researchers have identified that transport workers are potentially exposed to a high risk of violence at work (D. Chappell & Di Martino, 2000; Milczarek, 2010), whilst other researchers, such as Dickson and Bevan (2005), go as far as indicating that for some railway workers violence is an everyday experience. However, Dickson and Bevan (2005) reported that audit inspections undertaken by the British Health and Safety Executive on six train operating companies in Britain, found that whilst the frequency and level of violence was a concern to the train operating companies, the true level of violence was not known. Further, the audits identified that there was a general acceptance by management in those train operating companies that “assailants bring the situation to the railway and therefore ‘what can we do?’” (Dickinson & Bevan, 2005, p. 449). Although the risk of violence is well known, on analysis of the audits Dickson and Bevan (2005) also identified that recommendations from incident investigations to prevent future violent incidents occurring were extremely limited. Australia is no different. Railway environments in Australia, like railway environments the world over, are subject to anti-social behaviour from a small proportion of the travelling public (T. Cooper, et al., 2007; Teague & Leith, 2008a, 2008b). However, whilst the literature acknowledges the occurrence of violence on rail systems, it appears silent on the role of law enforcement officers, such as transit officers, working in a railway environment and dealing with this violence. This study has therefore drawn from previous research undertaken in various environments with police (Beck, 1999; Crank, 2004; C. Wilson, Gross, & Beck, 1994).

## **2.2 The Use of Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) in Public Places**

Over recent years there has been a proliferation of closed circuit television (CCTV) cameras in public and private settings in a bid to increase security and combat crime (Smithsimon, 2003; Williams & Johnstone, 2000; D. Wilson & Sutton, 2004). A CCTV system can be described as a system where cameras are linked together in a loop or complete circuit and transmit images to a control monitoring room and/or to a recording system (Goold, 2004). This is achieved by either a cable

or a microwave signal (Goold, 2004). According to Bannister and Fyfe (2001), this growth in surveillance systems is the result of an attempt by British towns and cities to halt the decline of their commercial areas as a result of the competition from safer and more secure out-of-town retail parks. Governments and corporations worldwide continue to view cameras as an important deterrent by increasing the fear of detection for people engaged in crime and disorder offences in public places (Coleman & Sim, 2000; Williams & Johnstone, 2000). As a result, some governments provide substantial funding for cameras and offer them as evidence to argue that they are taking steps to tackle crime (Goold, 2002; Newburn, 2001; Short & Ditton, 1998; D. Wilson & Sutton, 2004). However, many in the community argue that these cameras are an invasion of personal privacy (Coleman & Sim, 2000; Prenzler, 2004; The Economist, 2007); whilst others question the deterrent effect these cameras have on crime (Short & Ditton, 1998; Sivarajasingam, Shepherd, & Matthews, 2003). In spite of these arguments, Teague, et al., (2010b) highlight the advantages that these cameras can provide in a railway environment. These include the accurate identification of offenders; the ability to track offenders across the rail system; plus the cameras assist in the speedy deployment of back up support for transit officers, should a situation warrant this.

Although CCTV cameras are installed as a means of monitoring the activities of people in public places, Goold (2004) in his research with police found similar findings to research conducted by Lister, Hobbs, Hall, and Winlow (2000) with bouncers, that the use of the CCTV cameras could also provide protection for officers against complaints by a member of the public. These complaints were usually based on an accusation that the officer had acted inappropriately in some manner, such as the excessive use of force against a member of the public. Camera footage could be used as evidence in a defence against this claim. Like the police, transit officers provide the front line of deterrence in the fight against anti-social behaviour and crime on the rail system and are subject to similar complaints from the public.

According to Tilley (1997), the public feel safer knowing that there are many cameras in the area, although a number of researchers who investigate surveillance operations argue that the use of these cameras in CCTV contexts can lead to abuse such as racial profiling, the harassment of gays, and sexual voyeurism (Goold, 2004;



Smithsimon, 2003; Wells, Allard, & Wilson, 2006). Nevertheless, transport systems worldwide continue to install cameras in their trains, buses and related infrastructure (Manning, 1997; Wells, et al., 2006). As Williams and Johnstone (2000, p. 184) highlight, “It is now the rule rather than the exception for any reasonably sized community to have CCTV surveillance of its public spaces”.

### **2.3 Organisational Culture**

A lack of specificity in definition, combined with confusion in the literature between the terms ‘organisational climate’ and ‘organisational culture’ have resulted in these terms being used synonymously (Glendon & Stanton, 2000). Hale (2000) believes that the term ‘organisational culture’ is trending to replace ‘organisational climate’ as the dominant term in management studies. On the other hand, Glendon and Stanton (2000) argue that there is a difference in the meanings of the two terms, with organisational climate being a more superficial concept than organisational culture. Whereas Schein (1992, p. 9) views climate as one of the social concepts that relate to culture and describes it as: “the feeling that is conveyed in a group by the physical layout and the way in which members of the organization interact with each other, with customers, or with other outsiders”. Glick (1985), writing twenty five years ago, suggests that the difference is in terms of applied methodology, and posits that both terms emanate from different philosophies. This view is supported by Cox and Flin (1998) who argue that organisational climate originates mainly from a psychological framework using psychological approaches, whilst the notion of organisational culture is constructed from anthropological perspectives. However, Denison (1996) views the differences between organisational climate and organisational culture as differences in interpretation of research findings rather than differences in the actual phenomenon. Whilst noting the arguments in the literature, this study has used the term ‘culture’ rather than ‘climate’ to convey a more inclusive concept of the facets of a group or organisation’s workings.

Schein (2004, p. 17) defines the culture of a group:

As a pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learnt by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.

Another way Schein (1992, p. 8) describes culture is “the way we do things around here”, while Crank (2004, p. 15) refers to it as “collective sense-making”. As Hopkins (2005) identified, it may not be the correct way of doing things, but it has become the accepted norm. These practices, or ways of operating, originate from the basic underlying assumptions that the group hold as important. These are formed by the unconscious, taken for granted beliefs, perceptions, thoughts, and feelings that the group embrace as important (Schein, 2004). Schein (2004) views culture as having three layers: 1) the bottom layer which is the underlying assumptions; 2) the second layer which are the values which the group hold as important, including the strategies, goals and philosophies of the group; and 3) the top level or visible signs and artefacts that the group embrace. People attribute meaning to these artefacts and organisational symbols which include clothing, myths and stories, work practices, and the ceremonies and observable rituals that the unit adopts (Fielding, 1994; Schein, 2004). Freckelton (2000) views the evolution of a group’s culture as a way in which the group or organisation preserves its integrity and autonomy, differentiating that group from the environment, and from other groups. Essentially, the group’s culture provides it with an identity. Schein (1992) posits that to really understand the culture of a group it is necessary to understand the basic underlying assumptions that the group holds and the learning processes by which the basic assumptions were developed.

Hopkins (2005) whilst accepting the definition of culture promoted by Schein (1992) argued in his analysis of the findings of the Glenbrook Rail disaster by McInerney (2001) that the culture of an organisation can be shaped by external factors:

It is clear that the culture of an organisation will be powerfully shaped by the needs of external stakeholders such as passengers or, in other contexts, shareholders. Where stakeholder interest is championed by the press and politicians, as it is in the case of railway commuters, it becomes an irresistible force moulding the organisational culture.

(Hopkins, 2005, p. 52)

### ***2.3.1 Culture of law enforcement officers***

A significant amount of literature has been written on the culture of police officers in organisations (Chan, 1997, 2000, 2004; Crank, 2004; Crank, Payn, &

Jackson, 1993; Fielding, 1994; Van Maanen, 1973; Waddington, 1999), with the majority of the literature concentrating on officers working within the operational arena. Manning and Van Maanen (1978, p. 267) later cited by Chan, Devery & Doran (2003, p. 8) to describe the occupational culture constructed by police as:

Consist[ing] of long standing rules of thumb, a somewhat special language and ideology that help edit a member's everyday experiences, shared standards of relevance as to the critical aspects of the work, matter-of-fact prejudices, models for street-level etiquette and demeanour, certain customs and rituals suggestive of how members are to relate not only to each other but to outsiders, and a sort of residual category consisting of the assorted miscellany of some rather plain police horse sense.

This concept of police culture emerged from ethnographic studies of police which uncovered a range of occupational norms and values which are similar in police cultures worldwide (Chan, 1997; Crank, 2004; Manning, 1997; Skolnick, 1985; Van Maanen, 1973, 1978a). Skolnick (1985), refers to these standard patterns of behaviours as the common "working personality" of police officers (Skolnick, 1985, p. 91). Similarly, Waddington (1999, pp. 295 - 296) advanced the view that these police cultural elements and behaviours were transnational:

I maintain that there is indeed a police subculture whose core elements are to be found across a remarkably broad spectrum of police talk in a wide variety of jurisdictions. Throughout the United States, which contains many significant elements of internal divisions between jurisdictions and law enforcement agencies, the core elements of the police subculture remain recognizably the same. Those elements are shared throughout the various jurisdictions that constitute the United Kingdom, including Scotland and even Northern Ireland.

Further, Waddington (1999) noted these similarities were also evident in Canada, Australia and India.

Some researchers highlight the difference in the culture between management officers in the police force and the lower ranks of police officers, who are often referred to as 'street cops' (Reuss-Ianni, 1983) or 'patrol cops' (Manning, 1997). Police officers often have to make swift decisions, sometimes with limited information on which to base their decision, and this can lead to mistakes being made (Crank, 2004; Spano, 2007). Whilst both management and lower ranks share the same goal of combating crime and supporting public safety, the street cop

believes the ability to “recognise, identify and respond to a situation rather than the internalization of standardized rules and procedures, characterizes ‘good police work’” (Reuss-Ianni, 1983, p. 7). In contrast, a competing ethos places the importance “not in the traditions of the job, but rather in theories and practices of scientific management and public administration” (Reuss-Ianni, 1983, p. 6). These differences of perspective help explain some of the reasons why management and operational police can find it difficult to communicate about the realities of their everyday experiences.

A number of these studies have reported that the assumptions and values that the police officers hold are in response to their work environment (Chan, et al., 2003; Crank, 2004; Freckelton, 2000; Warren & James, 2000). For example, police officers are often referred to as cynical, hard, suspicious and loyal to their fellow officers (Chan, 1996; Crank, 2004), although a study conducted by Metzger (2004) in an American police organisation did not identify any cynicism amongst the officers taking part in the research. However, Metzger’s (2004) finding may have been due to the method of qualitative research chosen, interviews and surveys, in place of an ethnographic study over a period of time, where the officers become accustomed to a field observer being present and begin to act naturally and spontaneously. Spano (2007) found in his research with police that initially there were two observable outcomes when an observer was present. His view was that behaviour polarised in response to being observed. Officers became more proactive, possibly due to not wanting the observer to get bored, and were perceived to be more aggressive when dealing with calls. Alternatively, there was evidence that officers sheltered observers and became less proactive. Spano’s (2007) research may have been compromised by short time frames; even so, over time, these reactions to the observer were negated.

Researchers often refer to the social isolation of police officers which increases their collegial solidarity (Crank, 2004; Manning, 1997), with Fielding (1994) identifying their constant emphasis to on ‘the job’ as an entity, or to their experience ‘on the street’. He suggests these references serve to provide a solidarity display of their occupational group. Many studies emphasise the danger of police work, where officers may be exposed to situations in which both their physical and psychological well-being is affected (Chan, 2000; Van Maanen, 1973; Warren & James, 2000),

whilst others refer to the unpredictability of the job in dealing with difficult and risky situations (O'Loughlin & Billing, 2000). Similar to police officers, transit officers face comparable challenges every day.

Previous researchers have identified that police organisations are based on a quasi-military structure and model (Auten, 1985; Crank, 2004; Manning, 1978, 1997; Reuss-Ianni, 1983). The paramilitary model's fundamental principles are centred on discipline and accountability, which provide the basis for many enduring features of police culture. Rules proliferate within police organisations and complex systems exist to punish any violators (Manning, 1997; Waddington, 1999) but, as Reuss-Ianni (1983, p. 64) identifies, this "does not also confer unquestioned obedience". The paramilitary model has led to a 'them and us mentality' among colleagues, where the only people you can count on are your fellow officers. The 'them' refers not only to members of the public but also to commanding officers (Crank, 2004; Terrill, Paoline, & Manning, 2003; Van Maanen, 1973). Officers are rarely praised for work well done (Waddington, 1999), and quickly learn to 'lay low' and 'cover their ass'; in other words, to keep out of trouble and avoid disciplinary action (Chan, et al., 2003). Brown (1988, p. 9), cited in Terrill et al., (2003, p. 1005), succinctly describes the police officers' relationship with their environment:

What must be recognized is that patrolmen lead something of a schizophrenic existence; they must cope not only with the terror of an often hostile and unpredictable citizenry, but also with a hostile-even tyrannical-and unpredictable bureaucracy.

Cowper (2000) disagrees that police organisations are based on a 'military model' and refers to the 'myth of the military model of leadership'. Cowper argues that whilst missions and objectives are similar, the military model builds on successful operations in the past, has a "lesson learnt" program which "incorporates existing doctrine with detailed and open after-action critique designed to speed improvement in operational and structural methodologies" (Cowper, 2000, p. 243). In contrast, Cowper (2000) argues that police organisations fail to adopt the operational methods and leadership style displayed by the military, thereby diminishing the effectiveness of the military model. This view is similar to that expressed by Chan (2000), who posits that accountability in police organisations has previously been based on internal discipline, such as departmental procedures and dress code, rather than effective decision-making. In a crisis situation, commanders

of military organisations are always involved in their operations. In contrast, senior police officials, who are responsible for the success or failure of an operation, may be removed from action on the street and may be reluctant to take the advice from a trained operational specialist who may be many ranks their junior. In summary, Cowper (2000) highlights the need for police organisations to study and learn from the military model and adopt specific military theories and practices, suggesting that such a strategy may lead to safer and less violent outcomes when dealing with criminal activity.

McCulloch (2000) argues that while soldiers and police officers share many common cultural aspects, including solidarity amongst the officers, a common uniform, shift work and the use of specialist language and codes; there are also notable differences in the way the police and military are organised and operate. Soldiers function as a part of a disciplined body while police generally have a high degree of operational discretion. Additionally, the purpose of police discretion and soldier discipline is opposite. Soldier discipline is aimed at overcoming inhibitions to killing; police discretion is aimed at avoiding harsh consequences. This difference is further emphasised when any excessive force is used in a police and citizen encounter. An officer is subject to departmental discipline, and may additionally be subject to common law assault charges. However, O'Loughlin and Billing (2000) question whether the use of excessive force, as opposed to intentional assault, is the product of a distinct police culture or "whether it may be symptomatic of the body's natural 'fight or flight' response, to which we are all vulnerable" (O'Loughlin & Billing, 2000, p. 70). It can be noted here that the least experienced officers, like transit officers, are often the youngest, and these can be employed as early as their eighteenth birthday when 'fight or flight' responses may be particularly pronounced.

## **2.4 Safety Culture**

The relationship between the culture of a group or organisation and their experience of accidents and safety incidents has now been well established (Clarke, 2000; Hopkins, 2005; Mearns & Flin, 1999; Reiman & Oedewald, 2006). Hopkins (2005) argues that the leaders of an organisation are the ones that determine how the organisation functions and it is a result of their decision making "which determines, in particular, whether an organisation exhibits the practices which go to make up a culture of safety" (Hopkins, 2005, p. 8). However, as far back as thirty years ago,

Heinrich, Peterson and Roos (1980) identified the interactive relationship between psychological, situational and behavioural factors at the operator level in accident investigations. Over subsequent years, other researchers such as Hale and Glendon (1987), and Pidgeon (1991), also identified the relationship between those basic principles, and expressed a similar view that it was necessary to look beyond purely technical reasons for an accident occurring, and to examine as well the behavioural circumstances which may have contributed to the event. Reason (1997), in his work on managing the risks of organisational accidents, also identified this reciprocal relationship between three critical elements which he referred to as “the person (unsafe acts), the workplace (error provoking conditions), and the organisation” (Reason, 1997, p. 17). However, one prompt for this growing interest, particularly as it relates to high risk industries, was the release of the initial report by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on the Chernobyl nuclear accident (International Atomic Energy Agency, 1986). In this report, the culture of the organisation was identified as contributing significantly to events leading to the reactor meltdown. Prior to that report, as I previously argued in Teague and Leith (2008b), simple worker error might have been found to be the cause (Hopkins, 2000). However, the Chernobyl report identified the entire organisational safety culture as problematic.

As a result of the Chernobyl report, awareness grew of how the prevailing safety culture of an organisation may contribute to events. This perspective informed other large-scale accident investigations. Examples include the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Space Challenger Incident (Rogers Commission Report, 1986), the Exxon Valdez oil tanker grounding (National Transportation Safety Board, 1990), the Piper Alpha oil platform explosion (Cullen, 1990), Glenbrook Rail Accident (McInerney, 2001), and the Longford Oil Refinery explosion (Hopkins, 2000). In all these incidents the safety culture of the organisations were identified as significantly contributing to potentially fatal events. These reports and ancillary research led to the recognition by safety professionals and by safety regulators (particularly of high risk enterprises, such as the nuclear, air and rail industries), that traditional safety management systems based purely on hazard identification and rectification are inappropriately limited. The contribution made by organisational culture to the safety of the overall enterprise must be

recognised. This new perspective has resulted in regulators requiring organisations to demonstrate that they have systems of work in place which recognise, integrate, incorporate and monitor human factors as a crucial element in their effective management of safety and risk (Health and Safety Executive, 2005a; National Transport Commission Australia, 2006, 2008; Standards Australia, 2006a). In the Australian rail industry, this is a requirement under legislation when rail organisations obtain their accreditation as railway operators from the Rail Safety Regulator (National Transport Commission Australia, 2006; "Western Australia Rail Safety Act," 2010). Additionally, recognising the important contribution made by human factors to the overall safety experience, rail safety regulators require these elements to routinely be addressed in any accident or incident investigation (Standards Australia, 2006b).

Hale and Hovden (1998) view this growing interest in safety culture as the 'third age of safety'. The first and second ages being (1) hazard control technologies, and (2) human factors. DeJoy (2005, p. 114) comments however, that "much remains to be learnt about defining and measuring safety culture, as well as about assessing the overall impact of different types of safety cultures". Cox and Flin (1998) are in a small minority when they suggest that the idea of safety culture has been over-sold, and there is a naive belief that it represents the solution to all health and safety problems, referring to it as "a philosopher's stone to cure all ills" (Cox & Flin, 1998, p. 189). Cooper (2000, p. 3) sees the situation in much more complex terms suggesting that "safety culture does not operate in a vacuum: it affects, and in turn is affected by, other non-safety-related operational processes or organisational systems". Similarly, Glendon and Stanton (2000) believe that organisational culture is not owned by one group but is created by all the organisation's members. Conversely, Hopkins (2000, p. 74), in his examination of the findings from the Longford Gas Plant Explosion, was concerned that management viewed culture as a "matter of individual attitudes – attitudes which can be cultivated at work, but which in the final analysis are characteristics of individuals, not the organisations to which they belong". Hopkins (2000) believes that this outlook is common in the business world and contrasts this to the sociological and anthropological view of culture which is that culture is a characteristic of a group, and not an individual phenomenon. Helmreich and Merritt



(1998) argue when organisational culture is examined from an anthropological approach “each organisational culture is unique and socially constructed”.

A number of definitions of safety culture can be found in the literature, however a commonly used one is the definition that was originally developed by the Health and Safety Executive’s Advisory Committee on the Safety of Nuclear Installations (ACSNI) and subsequently adopted by the British Health and Safety Executive (M. D. Cooper, 2000; Dannatt, Marshall, & Wood, 2006; Health and Safety Laboratory, 2002).

The safety culture of an organisation is the product of individual and group values, attitudes, perceptions, competencies and patterns of behaviour that determine the commitment to, and the style and proficiency of, an organisation’s health and safety management.

Organisations with a positive safety culture are characterised by communications founded on mutual trust, by shared perceptions of the importance of safety and by confidence in the efficacy of preventive measures.

Other definitions of safety culture have been developed over the years. For example, the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), argues that it exists as a result of “the ideas and beliefs that all members of the organisation share about risk, accidents and ill health” (cited by Cooper, 2002, p. 4); and Guldenmund (2000, p. 251), defines it as “those aspects of the organisational culture which will impact on attitudes and behaviour related to increasing or decreasing risk”.

These definitions of safety culture, although varying slightly, have been developed from the general concept of organisational culture (Wiegmann, Zhang, von Thaden, Sharma, & Gibbons, 2004). As Wiegmann et al., (2004) note, many well known books have also contributed to the interest, debate and general understanding of the importance of culture. These books include ‘In Search of Excellence: Lessons From America’s Best Run Companies’ (Peters & Waterman Jr., 2004). Even so, Guldenmund (2000) suggests that the element missing in many publications on safety culture is the lack of an empirical model outlining the method through which safety culture is rooted in the organisation’s practices and systems. Published in the same year, Cooper (2000) offers a three-concept framework of safety culture, advocating that the importance of this lies in the dynamic reciprocal relationships between the different concepts, which he refers to as (1) psychological

aspects – members’ perceptions about, and attitudes towards, organisational goals; (2) members’ behaviour; and (3) organisational or corporate aspects.

Helmreich and Merritt (1998) in their research in two environments, aviation and medicine, identified the interaction of professional culture, national culture and organisational culture as having the capacity to positively and negatively affect safety outcomes. Hayward (1998), examining professional culture within the aviation industry, found that subcultures exist within the industry which can be labelled as occupational or work group cultures. A professional culture may have a special expertise leading to a high sense of self-worth for the members (Hayward, 1998). Coady (2000, p. 62) refers to the requirement by some professions for “ruthlessness, toughness and suspicion”. The drawback is that such an attachment to professionalism can also lead to the feeling of invulnerability of members, which can become an integral part of the self concept endorsing unrealistic attitudes about members’ performance capabilities when faced with various kinds of stressors (Helmreich & Merritt, 1998).

The literature indicates that a positive safety culture is a way through which organisations can achieve higher safety standards and thereby reduce the potential for both minor incidents and large scale disasters (Antonsen, 2009; M. D. Cooper, 2000; Hopkins, 2005; Reason, 1995). Having identified this, I was keen to understand the characteristics of a positive safety culture in order to assess whether these same characteristics were, or were not, present in the security section of the RTO. If some or all of the elements were absent, this might contribute to the high injury rate amongst the transit officers, as cited in the official source of ‘Hansard’ record of proceedings of the West Australian Parliament (West Australian Legislative Council, 2009).

Following on from this literature review, and in line with the preferred perspectives adopted by Rail Safety Regulators, I looked to the work of Reason (1997) to inform this research. Reason (1997) argues that there are four principles of a positive safety culture which combine to create an informed culture. An informed culture is “one in which those who manage and operate the system have current knowledge about the human, technical, organisational, and environmental factors that determine the safety of the system as a whole” (Reason, 1997, p. 195). Weick and Sutcliffe (2001) support Reason’s (1997) description of an informed culture, and

refer to an organisation maintaining a state of ‘wariness’ or ‘organisational mindfulness’, because “culture, mindfulness, and coping with the unexpected are visible in safety cultures, they illustrate what it means to create a more mindful organization” (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001, p. 128). Such a conceptual framework is best obtained by the collection and dissemination of information relating to incidents, accidents and any near miss occurrences which will provide an overview of the state of the organisation’s safety system.

Reason (1997) describes the necessary elements to achieve an informed culture as being a ‘reporting culture’, ‘just culture’, ‘flexible culture’ and a ‘learning culture’. Reason (1997) argues that each element is important, and management influence on the development of these aspects of safety culture is significant. Whilst different researchers in the literature have in some cases used different labels for the various elements identified by Reason (Reason, 1997), many of the underlying concepts share significant features. Reason’s (1997) perspectives on safety culture have been adopted by rail safety regulators both within Australia and Britain (Health and Safety Executive, 2005a; Standards Australia, 2006a). For instance, these elements identified by Reason (1997), were used by the Australian Rail Industry Safety and Standards Board (RISSB), under licence from the British Health and Safety Executive (Health and Safety Executive 2005a, 2005b), to develop a toolkit for the rail industry (Rail Industry Safety and Standards Board, 2010). This toolkit provides a consistent method of measuring an organisation’s safety performance. These characteristics of a positive safety culture are briefly outlined below.

#### ***2.4.1 Reporting culture***

A reporting culture requires trust to be developed between management and employees so that employees feel supported when they report safety issues (Reason, 1997; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001). Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995, p. 712) define trust as:

The willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party.

In organisations where this trust is present, employees are prepared to report accidents, and ‘near miss’ occurrences, unsafe conditions, inappropriate procedures,

plus any concerns that they may have about safety, as well as their own errors (Hopkins, 2005; Reason, 1997; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001). In such an environment, employees expect management to treat them fairly (Flin & Burns, 2004); and as the Global Aviation Information Network (GAIN) (2004) theorise, an increase in reporting of incidents is not indicative of a decrease in safety, but should be viewed as indicating a healthy safety culture.

#### **2.4.2 *Just culture***

An effective reporting culture is also a just culture, which is both transparent and dependant on how the organisation handles blame and punishment. Reason (1997, p. 195) describes a just culture as:

An atmosphere of trust in which people are encouraged, even rewarded, for providing essential safety-related information, but in which they are clear about where the line must be drawn between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.

Therefore, the culture is not blame free. Employees are accountable for their behaviour and any blatant disregard for rules or procedures would be subject to disciplinary action (Dekker, 2007; Reason, 1997; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001). When employees are clear where the culpability line is drawn, they are able to distinguish which behaviours are acceptable or unacceptable, and where punishment or disciplinary action will be taken. The theory acknowledges human error, and the organisational safety system supports learning from past mistakes (Dekker, 2007; Global Aviation Information Network (GAIN), 2004; Hopkins, 2005; Reason, 1997; Standards Australia, 2006a). It is therefore not a 'no blame' culture as a total amnesty on unsafe acts would lack credibility amongst the workforce, rather it is a 'just culture' where natural justice prevails (Dekker, 2007; Reason, 1997; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001).

#### **2.4.3 *Flexible culture***

A flexible culture enables an organisation to adapt to changing demands. It encompasses the ability to move from a normal hierarchical organisational structure to a flatter model, enabling decisions to be taken on the spot in an emergency by the people who are expert in the area. The structure then reverts to a more conventional bureaucratic model when the crisis has passed (Reason, 1997; Standards Australia, 2006a). As Reason (1997, p. 196) argues:

Such adaptability is an essential feature of the crisis-prepared organization and, as before, depends crucially on respect – in this case, respect for the skills, experience and abilities of the workforce and, most particular, the first line supervisors.

This decentralisation of authority in a time of crisis allows teams to deal efficiently and effectively at the local area level, without being constrained by inflexible rules and procedures (Reason, 1997; Standards Australia, 2006a). However, this requires that members of the team are competently trained and practiced in handling emergency events.

#### ***2.4.4 Learning culture***

To achieve the above elements of a safety culture requires the organisation to invest money and time in learning about what is already happening within the organisation. Hopkins (2006a, p. 252) refers to a learning culture as “a natural extension of a reporting culture”. This can be achieved by collecting information from the organisation’s own data bases; involving employees in their own safety management system and listening to members when they raise a safety issue; the willingness and ability to learn from what has previously occurred; and to act on those lessons to improve the safety system (Reason, 1997; Standards Australia, 2006a). Learning organisations also seek out information from accidents that have occurred in similar organisations worldwide, and apply any learning from that accident to their own organisation (Hopkins, 2006a). Weick and Sutcliffe’s (2001, p. 136) summary of a learning culture highlights the contribution it makes to a safety culture:

The combination of candid reporting, justice, and flexibility enable people to witness best-practices that occur within their own boundaries and to move toward adoption of them. An informed culture learns by means of ongoing debates about constantly shifting discrepancies. These debates promote learning because they identify new sources of hazard and danger and new ways to cope.

Regardless of the benefits of being a learning organisation, some companies grapple with the dilemma of exposing themselves to litigation. On the one hand they need to know about safety risks to put processes in place to reduce the risk of accidents, but on the other hand, they fear this knowledge increases their legal liability should an accident occur (Hopkins, 2006a). In spite of the occupational safety and health legislation present in their country or state, organisations caught in

this quandary may subvert the reporting process, have audit reports that are written in a white-washed style, and keep confidential any written report which may expose weaknesses in the safety system (Hopkins, 2006a). However, as Hopkins (2000) found in his analysis of the legal outcomes of the Esso Longford gas explosion, a failure to identify all the hazards and instruct employees about the safety risks did not lessen their legal liability (Hopkins, 2000, 2006a).

## **2.5 Communication**

The importance of communication in relation to this study can be divided into two main components: (i) the flow of information within the organisation and in particular in the security area; and (ii) the personal communication skills that transit officers display when dealing with members of the public. An overview of literature pertaining to these two categories of communication is discussed below.

### ***2.5.1 Flow of information***

The British Health and Safety Executive (2005b) believe the importance of communication within an organisation can be categorised into three main areas: “top-down (management to frontline), safety reporting (frontline to management) and horizontal communication (between peers)” (Health and Safety Executive, 2005b, p. 11). Reason (1997) identifies three main failures that can occur within such communication channels. He labels these as: (i) system failures, where one of these communication channels is absent; (ii) message failures, where the communication channel exists but the information is not sent; and (iii) reception failures, where the information is misinterpreted by the receiver, or not communicated when required. Communication messages can also be influenced by national cultural differences and leadership styles (Helmreich & Merritt, 1998). In some nationalities the preferred communication style is direct and specific, while in others it is indirect and relies on the context to carry the full meaning (Helmreich & Merritt, 1998). Leith (2003, p. ii) advances the view that “successful communication between culturally diverse groups requires each to achieve an understanding of the other”; each group may have a different perception regarding what constitutes a safety risk, or what makes a near miss incident (Bahn, 2009; Leith, 2008).

An important communication pathway, as viewed by employees, is what leaders choose to pay attention to. This shapes an employee’s perception of what is

important (Bahn, 2009; Health and Safety Executive, 2005b; Helmreich & Merritt, 1998; Schein, 1992; Westrum, 2004). Researchers have previously emphasised that if an organisation is committed to a strong safety culture, then the highest levels of management need to show an unequivocal commitment to safety, and this commitment must also be understood throughout all the organisation (Health and Safety Executive, 2005b; Helmreich & Merritt, 1998; Hopkins, 2005; Moray, 2006). This safety obligation can be communicated through the visible behaviours demonstrated by senior management, such as involvement in health and safety committee meetings; active participation in accident/incident investigations; and senior management taking time to tour the workplace (Health and Safety Laboratory, 2002). This active involvement by managers encourages two way communications and assists the fostering of trust between management and employees. Organisations may be good at cascading information down to employees, but are often less effective in establishing two way communication channels (Health and Safety Laboratory, 2002). A bi-direction communication process where employee safety concerns are listened to, acted upon, and feedback given to employees regarding their safety concerns, is an essential element in reducing safety risk, improving safety culture, and a vital step in the process of employees taking an active involvement in safety (Health and Safety Executive, 2005a).

### **2.5.2 *Personal communication skills***

Wilson (1992), referring to the work of Sullivan and Siegal (1972), identified that the perception of either party in a police – citizen encounter may shape the way in which an outcome is resolved. If either person discerns hostility from the other party, the event is more likely to end with the citizen being arrested, regardless of the initiating offence (C. Wilson, 1992). Further, Wilson (1992) draws our attention to studies conducted by Garratt, Baxter, and Rozelle (1981), and Sykes and Clark (1975) into police/citizen encounters, all of which found that police demonstrating even subtle variations in behaviour, which include non verbal cues, can influence the way a citizen reacts to a police officer. More recently, research conducted by Chan (2000), also concluded that confrontation can sometimes be avoided by the use of good communication techniques. Verbal communication consists of three components, with all three parts having the ability to influence the outcome of a police/citizen event. A person's voice takes about 33 – 40 percent of the weight,

such as the way the message is said; the content takes up about 7 – 10 percent of the impact of what is being said, and non verbal cues such body language comprise 50 – 60 percent (Thompson & Jenkins, 2004).

Wilson, Gross and Beck (1994) identified in their study that the personal safety risk to police officers could be reduced by officers feeling comfortable with being assertive without raising their level of anger. Wilson et al., (1994), consequently recommended training to help officers achieve those skills. King (2011, p. 5) describes one of the key skills as the ability for officers to “control themselves inside so they can exert control on the outside”. Thompson and Jenkins (2004), who had an understanding of police/citizen interactions from their work within the police force, published a book entitled *Verbal judo: The gentle art of persuasion*. This book is based on the authors’ training courses they developed and presented at police academies across the United States of America (USA) (Thompson & Jenkins, 2004), and subsequently delivered in other countries. These non-USA presentations were undertaken following a licensing agreement with a training agency in that country (King, 2011). The communication strategies used, whilst suitable for any situation, were primarily written for use by law enforcement agencies. The aim of the program was to treat people with respect, while still endeavouring to get the person to comply with your request. Thompson and Jenkins’s (2004) book provides readers with a knowledge of these skills and the method to verbally diffuse a situation rather than escalate a confrontation, even though a person may be aggressive, abusive or simply non compliant with a law enforcement officer’s request.

The objective of the ‘verbal judo’ training is to improve relationships and communications based on empathy. The approach is based on a five step process, which is not necessarily sequential, but which is very effective when mastered and used correctly (Thompson & Jenkins, 2004, pp. 167 - 174). These five steps are: (i) to listen – where a person’s body language must be congruent with listening; (ii) to empathise – here the skill is to let the person know that you understand the problem they have; (iii) to ask – In this step you ask questions to find out the facts; (iv) to paraphrase – At this stage the person puts into their own words what the other person is saying; and finally (v) to summarise – where what has been said is condensed into a succinct statement (Thompson & Jenkins, 2004, pp. 167 - 174). These skills, when



adopted by an officer, enable the officer to be assertive rather than aggressive, thereby reducing their risk of injury (Chan, 2000; C. Wilson, et al., 1994).

## **2.6 Training**

Organisations provide training to employees to equip them with the necessary skills to undertake their responsibilities safely and carry out tasks competently to a predetermined standard (Office of Rail Regulation, 2007). Competence can be defined as “a combination of practical and thinking skills, experience and knowledge and may include a willingness to undertake work activities in accordance with agreed standards, rules and procedures”(Office of Rail Regulation, 2007, p. 2). Training for law enforcement roles such as police officers, begins with a period of intense learning in a police academy, university or an ‘in-house’ accredited training school (Chan, et al., 2003; Crank, 2004). Many researchers have highlighted the fact that police culture is nurtured from the time the cadet enters the academy or training school (Crank, 2004; Kleinig, 2000; Van Maanen, 1973, 1978b). Trainers are usually ex policemen and use tales from the field to emphasise any learning. Police cadets, whilst learning “the lore of police work are simultaneously provided with a vocabulary of irony, danger, suspicion, and officer safety” (Crank, 2004, p. 226). The solidarity of police groups is generated from this early time at training, where officers are subject to strict discipline, obedience to departmental rules and strenuous physical training (Crank, 2004; Van Maanen, 1978b). This solidarity amongst recruits manifests itself as loyal support for their fellow officers on the street regardless of what occurs (Chan, et al., 2003; Reuss-Ianni, 1983).

Training is an important component of attaining competency. Even so, this knowledge requires the skills learnt, such as in the academy, to be practiced and mastered in the field to demonstrate competency (Health and Safety Executive, 2007; Office of Rail Regulation, 2007). To achieve this, new graduates from the police academy or training school undertake further training in the field, for a period of six to twelve months (Crank, 2004), prior to being deemed competent (Beck, 1999; Beck & Wilson, 1998; Chan, et al., 2003). Researchers in the past have referred to policing as a craft (Bayley & Bittner, 1984; Crank, 2004) to identify the importance of practice as well as the importance of theory. It can be imagined that an organisation that delivers its training solely in relation to theory, and does not also

provide training in the field, will be less able to handle safety challenges than an organisation where the training regime covers both theory and practice.

## **2.7 ‘Best-practice Management’ in Law Enforcement Agencies**

Measuring performance is an integral part of any management system (Arezes & Miguel, 2003). As Arezes and Miguel (2003) argue, whilst the main focal point of performance measurement is for internal purposes, there is a growing requirement to demonstrate to interested parties such as shareholders, regulators and insurance companies that an organisation’s occupational health and safety risks are controlled (Arezes & Miguel, 2003). Measuring performance, benchmarking and promulgating the results is one way management can demonstrate their accountability in this area. Benchmarking can be described as a management tool which enables organisations to measure their own performance against those of other establishments undertaking similar work, anywhere in the world (Dannatt, et al., 2006; Kreitner & Kinicki, 2001). It provides a “systematic means of collecting the latest information on ‘industry best-practice’” (Dannatt, et al., 2006, p. 10). However, to use this information effectively, organisations need to harness their own data before comparing and contrasting equivalent performance criteria obtained from similar establishments (Health and Safety Laboratory, 2002). Knowledge of new ideas, risk management, operational processes, equipment or procedures obtained from other businesses provides information that organisations can learn from, use to improve their own performance and achieve ‘best-practice’ in safety and risk management (Dannatt, et al., 2006; Kreitner & Kinicki, 2001).

Measuring performance can be undertaken actively and reactively, or by means sometimes referred to as ‘lead and lag’ indicators. Relevant indicators can differ significantly. Hopkins (2009b) advances the view that there is a distinction between measuring indicators of personal safety and process safety, suggesting that process safety measurements are measurements of the defences in place to prevent catastrophic events, such as damage to the environment, plant or multiple deaths (Hopkins, 2009b). Lead indicators to measure performance constitute active monitoring of a business and can include risk assessments, surveys, monitoring inspections, audits, and any other information relative to the performance of the business (Health and Safety Executive (HSE), 1999).

Standards Australia Railway Safety Management Part 1: General requirements (AS4292.1) (2006a) documents the need for railway organisations to have a system of regular audits in place which are used to confirm whether railway safety policies and procedures are being complied with, and to determine the effectiveness of the organisation's safety management system. These audits become part of the rail organisations' continuous improvement cycle (Standards Australia, 2006a). The National Transport Commission Australia (2008) provides guidance for rail organisations to develop and monitor positive performance indicators or lead indicators, and to communicate the results of these indicators to relevant parties. This includes the development of a security management plan encompassing measures to protect people from crime. However, there is no specific reference to monitoring the amount of crime or anti-social behaviour on the rail system.

In contrast to process safety, personal injury is measured reactively or after the event (Glendon, 2009; Hopkins, 2009b). This impacts the person rather than the plant. For instance, examining performance in safety management would include the company accident and near miss data, and require systematic analysis of accident causation (Dekker, 2006; Reason, 1997). Such analysis would identify all contributing factors which led to the event occurring, rather than merely attributing the blame to human error. Hopkins (2005) argues that human error can be the beginning of an investigation, rather than the conclusion, believing the investigation should examine the reasons which led to the person making an error. Reason (1990, pp. 8 - 9) discusses the differences between intended and unintended actions which lead to the errors occurring. Intended actions may fail to achieve their expected outcome as a result of poor planning which Reason (1990, p. 8) refers to as a 'mistake'. This planning failure or mistake Reason (1990, p. 8) distinguishes from execution failures, which he refers to as 'slips or lapses'. A comprehensive analysis of information around error, mistakes and lapses provides an opportunity to learn from past mistakes and highlights high risk areas. This in turn facilitates the development and implementation of controls to reduce the risk of a further incident occurring.

Many different 'best-practice' law enforcement agencies overseas, including transit policing organisations, use a management system called 'compstat' which is short for "computer comparison statistics" (Godown, 2009; Henry, 2003; Serpas,

2008). This multifaceted monitoring system is viewed by a number of law enforcement agencies as a critical component of the crime fighting process (DeLorenzi, Shane, & Amendola, 2006; Henry, 2003; Serpas, 2008). Godown (2009, p. 1) sums up the system as:

An innovative business management process, system, and strategic methodology that assists an organization in achieving its mission and goals. The methods are transferable, compatible and replicable in any organization or environment. In a police organization, compstat functions as a crime control process manifested in recurring meetings, usually weekly, during which the agency's performance indicators are reviewed critically for opportunities for improvement. This organizational management philosophy, concept, and tool combines a classic problem-solving model with accountability at all levels of an organization.

According to Henry (2003, pp. 243 - 246), compstat was initially developed in the New York Transit Police organisation during the period that Bratton was the Chief. At that time, crime was rampant in the subway and there was an urgent need to get it under control. As Chief of the Transit Police during the mid-nineties, Bratton realised the importance of accurate, timely information and would commence each day with a briefing on the significant events that had occurred on the system during the previous twenty four hours. This real-time information enabled a quick response to be made as crime conditions and trends changed. The system:

Permitted management to rapidly collect accurate crime statistics and to analyse the data in a useful and meaningful way so that informed decisions could be made about the deployment of resources and the type of strategies that would be most effective in reducing crime. It also permitted management to quickly identify fluctuations and change in crime statistics, to rapidly assess the effectiveness of these decisions and strategies, and to monitor crime conditions to ensure that the strategies work.

(Henry, 2003, p. 248).

Whilst the compstat system has undergone many refinements over the years the philosophy of the system remains the same. The computer program supporting its implementation is suitable for use in any business that wishes to harness information, demonstrate accountability and communicate results (DeLorenzi, et al., 2006; Henry, 2003; Peak, 2009; Serpas, 2008).

A further crime fighting approach identified in the literature is the ‘broken window’ theory (Blumstein, 1999; Bratton, 1999; Bratton & Knobler, 1998; Crank, 1994; Henry, 2003; J. Q. Wilson & Kelling, 1982) which was also adopted by Bratton alongside compstat processes. The broken window theory was originally put forward by Wilson and Kelling (1982) in an article in the *Atlantic Monthly*, and refers to the idea that if you leave a window broken in an unoccupied building the remaining windows will soon be broken, promoting a sense of disorder within a community. Anti-social behaviour that is left unchecked can signal a similar response to perpetrators, indicating that nobody cares about the community and neighbourhood, leading to citizens developing a fear of going into their community. A reduction in everyday activity results in more serious disorder occurring, and in escalating crime (J. Q. Wilson & Kelling, 1982). In other words, if something appears to be uncared for in a neighbourhood, others will not care for it either, and the number of things uncared about expands.

According to Wilson and Kelling (1982, p. 31) “vandalism can occur anywhere once communal barriers – the sense of mutual regard and the obligations of civility – are lowered by actions that seem to signal that ‘no one cares’”. For example, graffiti in the subway signals to the community that officials have no way of stopping minor crime, therefore they have no hope of halting any serious offences (Kelling, 1991). Bratton later adopted this theory for the New York Transit System with success in attacking fare evasion, graffiti, crime and disorder in the subway and railcars (Bratton & Knobler, 1998). Levine (2005) suggests that this theory can be applied to any business. If an organisation fails to address the small things it will give the impression that something is wrong with the business.

## **2.8 Summary**

Many spheres of literature were examined for this study, both to review the state of current knowledge and to identify any gaps or issues relevant to the work that transit officers undertake. Previous research on organisational culture was examined, with particular attention paid to the culture of law enforcement officers. However, no research was identified specifically relating to the culture of transit officers, who have a law enforcement role with the ‘power or arrest’, but do not have full policing powers. Consequently, I referred to research conducted within police agencies for this study. Significantly, whilst research on many aspects of the culture

of police officers was identified, there was little evidence of any linkage between safety and culture in law enforcement roles. However, information relating to ‘best-practice’ law enforcement agencies did highlight the need to capture information to identify problem areas, reduce crime and improve performance and accountability. With the limited research available in this area, and the need to investigate all accident/incident occurrences, I relied on previous safety research undertaken in organisations considered high risk environments; even where these did not focus on law enforcement processes. I was able to examine what previous researchers believed contributed to a safety culture in a range of contexts, such as in airline, nuclear and oil industries. From this literature, I gained an understanding of the importance placed upon accident/incident investigations to examine all contributing factors to any significant event, and identified how this information could be used to prevent a re-occurrence of an incident. This knowledge contributed to the formation of a theoretical base which I was able to build on in my research with transit officers as I examined whether their safety and communication culture contributed to their risk of injury.

As transit officers work predominantly at night, I examined previous research undertaken on the ‘night time economy’ which provided an overview of the difficulties people can encounter when working at night. I studied the use of CCTV in public places and evaluated studies exploring the positive and negative impacts of CCTV upon law enforcement roles. Good communication skills were identified in the literature review as being important for people in customer service positions, which particularly includes law enforcement officers. The literature highlighted the importance of mastering these communication skills, and demonstrates that good communication can significantly alter the outcome of a citizen/law enforcement officer interaction. Although training of transit officers was not identified in the literature, the importance of training for law enforcement officers was examined, revealing that many organisations require that officers are competent both in communication theory and practice.

The following chapter discusses the method used to undertake the research and to achieve the answers to the research question. It also addresses how the research contributes to closing the gaps identified in the literature review around the transit

officer workforce and management processes such as incident data gathering and analysis, injury rates and transit officer communication practices.

## **CHAPTER THREE METHOD**

### **3. INTRODUCTION**

More often those in the setting welcome the researcher as someone who can provide them with an audience and a voice

(Lee, 1995, p. 15)

Transit officers believe that people don't understand what they have to put with. Transit Officer Steve told me "I'm amazed that you're actually allowed to be out here with us, because you are getting firsthand knowledge, you get to watch the way that we deal with things. I think this is fantastic". Transit officers themselves cannot speak out: they wanted a 'voice'. They wanted somebody to understand their world from their perspective. Over the years there have been many negative reports in the press, where somebody has accused a transit officer of using too much force (Pownall, 2010), or not dealing appropriately in some manner with a person of interest (Pownall, 2010 ; Stolley, 2010), or where the public is reported as feeling that the trains are not safe at night in spite of the presence of transit officers (Pownall, 2010 ; Rondganger, 2010 ). However, the travelling public does not generally understand the situations that transit officers have to deal with, particularly at night; or the powers that the officers have, such as the power of arrest. This leaves transit officers feeling that they are not respected by the public in the same manner that other first line response forces are: the police, ambulance officers and fire fighters. Coupled with this issue, the RTO management's philosophy is that all statistics are confidential whether these be transit officer arrests, transit officer injuries, transit officer lost time, assaults on transit officers or any other crimes that occur on the railway system. They are not for public scrutiny and not to be used or disclosed in any research findings. As one of the more senior managers told me:

What I do have a problem with is just politically we are not able to use them [statistics], because the media cane us, and they heighten the sort of anxiety about the perception of crime. ... It is hard and we are not recognised nearly enough and it is deemed that we are almost like viewed as the poor cousins.

This management opinion supports the transit officers' views that they have a difficult job to do, and do not have a high profile. However, the management's



decision not to use or publish statistics prevents the public profile of the transit officer being improved, as well as ruling out the use of a mixed methodology for this research; that is, I was unable to use quantitative data to support any qualitative findings. In qualitative research the group or the community to be studied are the central actors of the research process. Oppressed groups may view a sympathetic 'outsider's' interest as enhancing their identity. As Harrington (2003, p. 610) believes, "the interest of the researcher can be interpreted as conferring a flattering aura of 'specialness' on that group". This became evident in the transit officer situation as the research progressed. On a number of times I was told by one of the transit officers "we are lucky to have you here". Importantly, the ethnographic researcher wants those who are studied to speak for themselves, by their own words and actions, whilst capturing the behaviours and attitudes that the group being studied portrays (Teague & Leith, 2008b). However, the use of statistics would have supported the transit officers' voice in explaining the personal, psychological and physical risk that they face daily.

The use of an ethnographic research method for this research project was predetermined in a signed Linkage Project Grant agreement between the RTO, Edith Cowan University and the Australian Research Council. Concern had been raised in the RTO at the high injury rate sustained by transit officers, usually as a result of a violent interaction with a member of the public during an arrest. Ethnography was viewed as the research method best able to provide an understanding of the issues that transit officers are exposed to and deal with, and the factors that contributed to those injuries. Further, the tripartite research agreement provided the researcher with the funding to examine what 'best-practice' transit police agencies do worldwide, to minimise crime on the rail systems and avoid injuries to officers. I was recruited as the PhD Candidate to undertake this research project. Even though the broad qualitative research methodology had already been decided, the method within that paradigm was left to my discretion. Whilst the RTO had agreed to this ethnographic research protocol, it became apparent as the research progressed that they had not expected the research to be carried out in-depth. As it was, the researcher became immersed in the transit officer world.

### **3.1 Research Aim**

The focus of this research was to gain an understanding of the transit officer communication and safety culture and how transit officers establish their own understanding of safety (which is not necessarily that of management). The aim was to reduce the risk of injury for transit officers. Using all the data that would be discovered during the research process, the objective of the research was to answer the following question:

Can an understanding of communication and safety culture provide opportunities for improving the safety of transit officers?

To answer this over-arching question, I broke it down further into four components:

1. How are safe systems of work communicated to transit officers and is the transit officers' understanding of safety congruent with management's understanding of safety?
2. Does the transit officer culture have the flexibility to deal with dangerous issues as they arise?
3. Is the transit officers' safety culture a uniform culture, or are there different subsets of culture existing within the transit officer environment?
4. What is transit officer best-practice in the public transport systems at both a national and international level?

### **3.2 Significance of the Research**

The research is significant because, over the long term, it is likely to lead to a change in safety culture and improved transit officer recruitment, training and better communication skills. An anticipated 'flow on' effect from these outcomes is a reduction in occupational safety and health injuries among transit officers. An improvement in safety would lead to reduced costs, and greater efficiency and reliability. A safer system would help make public transport a more attractive travel option for the general public which would assist in relieving traffic congestion and lessening environmental impacts in terms of a reduced reliance upon private cars. Further, these outcomes would have the benefit of being replicable nationally and internationally. The findings could potentially make a significant contribution to the

body of literature on occupational health, safety and communication issues in the law enforcement professions.

Underpinning the above research questions I wanted to understand how officers interpret their roles and safety responsibilities. I wished to investigate the job-related communication practices and whether these impact the outcome of an event; and I hoped to examine what preceded and followed an incident which led to an officer becoming injured. Although I could look to the literature for guidance on safety and reducing the risk of injury for employees in an organisation, I had no specific data available from this particular organisation to determine whether the problem was uniform throughout the transit officer cadre; or confined to a particular rail line or location; or whether the type of injuries that were occurring were constant; or any other information that would narrow the research field or help guide the research process.

### **3.3 Ethnographic Research**

Whilst there are other research approaches such as grounded theory and phenomenology in qualitative research; and other methods such as surveys, focus groups and interviews; this project was particularly suited to an ethnographic research protocol. Ethnography is not a new method of research; however its application in an occupational safety and health context is comparatively recent. Ethnography is a broad 'catch-all' term for a form of qualitative research that is undertaken within groups or communities over a sustained period of time. However, a mode of ethnography called 'autoethnography' has also emerged, which Gans (1999, p. 542) refers to as the "climax of the preoccupation with self", also conceptualised as "an autobiography written by sociologists" (Gans, 1999, p. 542). Ethnography is a research design which guides the researcher in choosing appropriate methods and to "shape the use of the methods chosen" (Crotty, 1998, p. 3). In this research approach, the researcher wants those who are studied to speak for themselves; to provide their perspective in words and other actions (Hammersley, 1992). The subjects are studied in their everyday contexts rather than under experimental conditions created by the researcher. The research data is gathered from a range of sources, but observations and/or relatively informal conversations are usually the main source of information. However, this information can be

supplemented by other methods such as interviews. The quality of the information gathered can be checked back with the participants to verify its accuracy.

Ethnographic research originated in the discipline of anthropology where, traditionally, a researcher immersed themselves within a non industrialised group or culture in their natural surroundings, to capture the uniqueness of that group; and gain an understanding of the particular culture associated with that community. However, in more recent times this method of research has been successfully used in organisations to provide a deeper understanding of; ‘the ‘blue collar shop floor culture’ (Hodson, 1991; Kriegler, 1980); how work is organised (Heath, Hindmarsh, & Luff, 1999; Orr, 1998); occupational groups and modern bureaucracies (Fleisher, 1989; Van Maanen, 1973); safety communication with shop floor employees (Leith, 2008); construction workers (Bahn, 2009); bouncers and legal risk (Monaghan, 2004) and surveillance studies (Walby, 2005). Over the last few years, with the ever increasing use of the internet as a means of communication, a new form of ethnography called ‘netnography’ has also emerged, which is the study of online communities (Costello, 2009; Kozinets, 2002).

As previously noted in Teague and Leith (2008b), in contrast to this in-depth method of research, the predominant method used in the past for studying organisational cultures and their effect on safety has been the survey method (Glendon & Stanton, 2000; Guldenmund, 2010; Hopkins, 2006b). Examples of where surveys have been used to investigate occupational health and safety issues include manufacturing (Cheyne, Oliver, Tomas, & Cox, 2002; M. D. Cooper & Phillips, 2004; Zohar, 2000), air transport (Gill & Shergill, 2004), the off shore environment (Cox & Cheyne, 2000), the nuclear industry (Harvey et al., 2002), the heavy and light manufacturing industries, and outdoor workers (Williamson, Feyer, Cairns, & Biancotti, 1997). Surveys have often been used in combination with safety audits (Grote & Kunzler, 2000). However, the survey method measures people’s perceptions of ‘how things are done’ which may not necessarily coincide with what actually occurs (Antonsen, 2009; Hopkins, 2006c). The idea that there is a gap between survey data and everyday life is supported by Guldenmund (2000) who argues that researchers from sociology, or the (social) psychological research tradition, have a reductionist approach and are “inclined to assume that a given culture or climate can be described by a limited number of dimensions”

(Guldenmund, 2000, p. 226). Schein (1992) argues that even if a questionnaire was designed covering many dimensions, one might still not know which of those dimensions are important to the group with regards to any particular issue.

Glendon and Stanton (2000) assert that many of the survey questionnaire projects undertaken in the study of safety in organisations involved selected employee samples, often collected at a time of organisational change, which may have reflected a particular response bias. They further allege that observational studies “while superficially offering ecological validity, are often of too short a duration to be able to provide sufficiently large samples of behaviour” (Glendon & Stanton, 2000, p. 209). Whilst noting that an ethnographic approach is time consuming (Hale, 2000; Hopkins, 2006b), a number of authors are now advocating that studying employees in their natural surroundings captures their social and cultural meanings in a systematic way (Glendon & Stanton, 2000; Guldenmund, 2000; Holmes & Gifford, 1996). Glendon and Stanton (2000) advocate the use of ethnography as possibly being the most valid methodology from an interpretive perspective, and assert that “comprehensive ethnographic studies of safety within contemporary organisations are awaited” (Glendon & Stanton, 2000, p. 209).

There are many similarities between ethnography and grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1969; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). However, the aim of the analysis in this situation is not to create theory as in the ‘grounded theory’ process, but to induce theory through the ethnographic process, from the perspectives of the members of the culture being observed (L. Green, 2003). Ethnography therefore is a research method that guides the research design process, and offers the framework for the research, which Crotty (1998) refers to in his book as the ‘scaffolding’ that supports the research process. In this situation, I was able to explore the transit officers’ construction of aspects of their everyday activities. Hammersley (1992, p. 13) argues that ethnography allows these phenomena to be represented in “new and revealing ways” through the process of me being implanted in their world. Recognising that participants create their own meanings, this research applies a constructionist epistemology. Understandings are constructed by uncovering concepts and themes through the research process, and exploring the meanings these concepts have for the participants (Teague, et al., 2010b). Geertz (1973, p. 10) describes this process as the ethnographer being faced with a “multiplicity of

complex conceptual structures, many of them superimposed upon or knotted into one another, which are at once strange, irregular, and inexplicit, and which he must contrive somehow first to grasp and then to render”.

### **3.3.1 *Participant observation***

Historically, participant observation has been the main form of ethnographic research (Johnson, Avenarius, & Weatherford, 2006), however, not all ethnographic research is participant observation; rather it can broadly be broken down into three main categories: direct observation, where the researcher openly observes what is occurring within a group or community by following them around and recording their activities; covert observation, where the researcher is part of a group or community but does not disclose their background or their research motive within that environment; and participant observation where the researcher is a full active member of the group or community, but openly declares their research agenda (Bernard, 2000). Whilst I immediately ruled out covert observation as a research method to use, on both ethical grounds and the need for the organisation to be open in their dealings with employees and passengers; I did consider the merit of undertaking the research using direct observation. At first sight this method appeared to be a safer option than participant observation. The high rate of injury for transit officers led me to consider the risk of injury to myself, as a participant observer, in their work environment. I concluded however, that recording details of what I was observing could not only lead to suspicion from the officers, but could also lead to suspicion from the passengers as to what information I was gathering. This could result in a passenger becoming anxious and aggressive causing a situation to escalate, increasing the risk of injury to an officer or myself. To successfully undertake ethnographic research, the researcher needs to build trust and rapport with the participants, thereby reducing the risk of reactivity, and increasing the validity of the data obtained (Bernard, 2000). Hobbs (Hobbs, 2006b) refers to the necessity of the researcher blending in with the rules, procedures and expectations of the locals. Following different transit officers around, recording what was occurring, would keep reminding officers that I was a researcher studying them and possibly reduce the validity of the data obtained.

Whilst I was familiar with safety systems, I was not familiar with safe practices in security or policing work. I found support for the use of the participant

observation method when conducting research into culture with employees in an occupation which is foreign to the researcher. Brooks (2005) demonstrates this with lobster fishermen, Spano (2007) with police, Holmes and Gifford (1996) with painters, and (Leith, 2008) with shop floor employees in a refinery. Brooks undertook his research with fishermen over a two and a half month period, “to test the use of ethnographic method for exploring the nature of the relationship between occupational culture, workplace social organization, and safety management” (Brooks, 2005, p. 795). Whilst Brooks (2005) believed his research would have been enhanced by the inclusion of more vessels and fishermen in the research process, he nevertheless believed that the ethnographic method used, participant observation, proved beneficial in “guiding policy, management systems and injury prevention” in that industry (Brooks, 2005, p. 812). Additional support for this view was found by Leith (2008), when he conducted his research into safety communication within a refinery. Leith found that participant observation produced excellent qualitative data. These outcomes sustained the view that an ethnographic method would be appropriate for this research project. Whilst a number of authors view ethnography as an art or as a craft (Bernard, 2000; Gustavson & Cytrynbaum, 2003; Rose, 1990); others are critical of the lack of training for observational research methods in Australia (Brooks, 2005); and a further group of researchers believe that participant observation must be learnt in the field (Bernard, 2000); which leaves the quality of the research and data obtained dependent on the experience and special characteristics of the researcher, and their ability to interact with the subjects (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). However, whilst I was cognisant of these issues, and the difficulties I might face as an older female achieving acceptance by a large group of male-dominated transit officers undertaking a policing role, I felt that starting as a new trainee transit officer and entering the field in the same manner that they do, coupled with my previous experience in counselling male ‘blue collar’ workers, in a workshop environment with over fifteen hundred males, would stand me in good stead to fit in with the transit officer cadre.

When deciding on the method I would use for entry to the organisation, I leant on the experience of previous researchers who have undertaken research in law enforcement roles, working as self acknowledged researchers. These include Fleisher (1989), in his research with prison guards, and Van Maanen’s (1988)

various research studies of urban police organisations. These projects confirmed the greater acceptance of the researcher by both management and officers where the researcher undertook the officers' training. Indeed, without the training, management informed Fleisher (1989) that he would have to be confined to an office, and the guards would come to him. Van Maanen's (1988, p. 86) view of his situation was:

The police, of necessity perhaps, are not gentle, impassionate sorts who can easily tolerate a deviant in their midst. The working style of an ethnographer is sure to reflect this. [ ....] the police will certainly be watching closely to determine, on the one hand whether or not they can 'depend' on the researcher, and, on the other hand, whether or not they can 'take the researcher out' without adverse consequences arising should the need arise.

Although Van Maanen (1973) made no effort to conceal his research intentions, the fact that he had undertaken the training provided him with an identity that was acceptable to other rookies in the service and to the higher police ranks. This gave Van Maanen a role that was familiar to the police, rather than the unfamiliar role of ethnographer, and that familiarity enabled him to access data, information, and collect observations that would not normally have been available to a researcher who was not similarly trained.

I quickly realised from the literature that undertaking fieldwork does not automatically guarantee me valid and reliable data. The importance of being accepted by the group as an active member of the workforce, so that they would continue their normal mode of operating, contributed to my decision to enter the field as a trainee transit officer. This decision was further consolidated by the knowledge that researching a seemingly dangerous occupation, without the competencies that other transit officers possess, would increase the risk to my safety (Hobbs, 2006a). I fully intended to declare my motivation for being there, but felt over time that I would gradually be accepted as one of the trainee cohort. This would also enable me to compare what was being taught to trainee officers, as they were prepared both mentally and physically for their future role, versus the practice that would confront us all when we entered the field. Whilst the organisation was concerned enough regarding the transit officers' high injury rate to facilitate this research being undertaken, there was no available data to assist me in mapping the



way forward in the research process. I relied on the research objective and the questions I had developed to guide the development of the research progress.

I concluded that achieving 'insider' status would provide the greatest opportunity to understand the subtle nuances of behaviour and the language used among the transit officers, therefore I needed to enter the workplace as a participant observer (Baker, 2006; Hammersley, 1992; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Tope, et al., 2005). As Tope et. al. (2005), and Johnson, Avenarius and Weatherford (2006) assert, the role that the researcher adopts when entering the field determines the amount and type of information that the researcher obtains. Nevertheless, controversy does exist between researchers on the merits of conducting participant observation versus interviews (Tope, et al., 2005). However, I concluded that the knowledge I would gain through participant observation both as a trainee and 'on the tracks' would inform development of questions for the interviews that I planned to conduct after the training, during a period of four months in the field. Grbich (1999, p. 123) defines participant observation as:

A technique of unobtrusive, shared or overtly subjective data collection, which involves a researcher spending time in an environment observing behaviour, action and interaction, so that he/she can understand the meanings constructed in that environment and can make sense of everyday life experiences. These understandings are used to generate conceptual/theoretical explanations of what is being observed.

The advantages of using this method included the opportunity it afforded me: to get as close to the action as possible, as potential safety-challenging events were occurring; to follow anything up if necessary; and to see firsthand what preceded an incident occurring. On the other hand, the main disadvantages of being a participant observer is that it is time consuming, and the researcher becomes the phenomenon, or part of the phenomenon, and can become emotionally involved in the research setting, sharing the values and concerns of the participants (Grbich, 1999).

One of my concerns when undertaking this research was not to let any preconceived ideas regarding transit officers cloud my research findings. Although I had no experience with the work of transit officers, I had experience in a fairly senior management position within a different area of the same organisation. I was familiar with the 'insider versus outsider' debate which is evident in the literature, and which

is sometimes termed the 'being native versus going native' debate regarding the merits and disadvantages of undertaking research in your own organisation (Chavez, 2008; Humphrey, 1995; Kanuha, 2000). In the case of the RTO, however, the transit officer section of the organisation was managed as a 'discrete entity' with minimal interactions with other operational areas. Coupled with this, I resigned from the organisation before embarking on the research project. I certainly considered myself an 'outsider' rather than an 'insider'. Nevertheless, I was cognisant of the risk that my 'management thinking' might influence my research undertakings. My position was similar to that which Humphrey (1995, p. 288) addressed in his research, when he argued that insiders do not necessarily have any advantage in terms of prior knowledge of issues. Humphrey (1995, p. 228) went on to say that:

Researchers must explicitly locate themselves within the organisation and ask themselves how factors such as their role in the organisation, their particular network of contacts, world view, and way of expressing that understanding of the world, will affect the research process and the meaning and interpretations drawn from the research data.

I was conscious that my previous position as a manager in the organisation could cast a shadow over the project, clouding my acceptance by transit officers as a participant observer. This led me to consider the best ways of gaining their trust such as: completely immersing myself in their work life; undertaking their training; and not contacting any of my previous peers. When commencing the research, I had not considered that acceptance by any of the managers in the work environment would be a concern. I based this thinking on the fact that the organisation had initially commissioned the research in order to discover ways of reducing the risk of injuries to transit officers. Nevertheless the issue of management acceptance turned out to be a problem. However, there was an upside to this situation. Transit officers soon became aware of the difficulties I was encountering with management, and the more difficult it became for me to work alongside them, the more the transit officers accepted me as one of their own. This dynamic is discussed further in subsequent chapters.

### **3.4 Ethical Considerations**

Before commencing this research project it was necessary to obtain ethics clearance from the University, by demonstrating to the University Human Research

Ethics Committee's satisfaction that my research would be conducted in accordance with the guidelines outlined in the *National statement on ethical conduct in human research* (Australian Government, National Health and Medical Research Council, & Australian Research Council, 2007) and the *Australian code for the responsible conduct of research* (National Health and Medical Research Council, Australian Research Council, & Universities Australia, 2007). In my application for their approval, specific attention was given to the confidentiality and privacy of conducting research which involved the interaction of transit officers with passengers. Whilst I was disclosing my motivation for being in the workplace to all employees, it was not feasible for me to declare my position to passengers who were unaware of my research role.

The identities of all the transit officers, supervisors and managers taking part in the forty one interviews that I conducted at the conclusion of my time spent 'on track', remain confidential. Quotes that have been obtained and documented throughout this thesis have been assigned a pseudonym, and in some situations a different gender to protect their identity. Occasionally, identifying details have been changed. All interviewees were recruited from volunteers within the transit officer cadre, and from the supervisors and managers employed by the RTO. Prior to the interviews, participants were given an information letter (see appendix 1) to read and an informed consent letter to sign (see appendix 2). Before commencing the interview itself I verified that all of the interviewees fully understood the contents of both documents.

Any observations made during the training and fieldwork, were documented using code names. The audio files from the interviews were also transcribed using pseudonyms. All transcribers of the interviews signed a confidential non-disclosure document prior to undertaking the transcribing. All data obtained during the course of the research has been dealt with, stored and will be destroyed in accordance with Edith Cowan University's *Policy on the conduct of ethical human research* (Edith Cowan University, 2007) and the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research* (National Health and Medical Research Council, et al., 2007).

### **3.5 Process of Fieldwork**

The fieldwork for this research project can be divided into six distinct phases. In the first phase I undertook the transit officer training. Phase two occurred unexpectedly when, having completed the training, I attempted to gain access to join the transit officers on track. This was initially denied on the grounds of my safety. Negotiating with the ‘gatekeeper’ resulted in an agreement that I would spend time in the closed circuit television (CCTV) monitoring room which would provide me with an overview of the rail system and the work of the transit officers, particularly as this unfolded over the duration of the night shift. I spent four weeks in this area which is covered in chapter 5 of this thesis. Following the CCTV work, further negotiations took place and management reluctantly granted me access to join the transit officers ‘on track’, and this formed phase three of the fieldwork. The fourth phase was spent conducting interviews with forty one RTO staff including transit officers, supervisors and managers working in the security section of the organisation. The fifth phase was spent learning what ‘best-practice’ agencies do to minimise crime on their rail network and injuries to their officers. The sixth and final phase was spent completing the analysis of the data and writing up the thesis. I will cover each of these phases in turn.

#### ***3.5.1 Phase 1: Training***

At the starting point for this phase I had a meeting with the management of the security section of the RTO, and requested their permission to undertake the transit officer training. I was referred to the training school where I met with the manager and coordinator of the training school to inform them both about the research project, and to obtain their agreement for me to commence as a trainee with the next intake of potential transit officers. Negotiations took place quickly as a new training cadre was due to start the following week. I commenced my training as a trainee transit officer and informed my fellow trainees and trainers that I was a researcher who intended to complete the training, and then commence work on track with them. This statement was at first met with suspicion, and some concern, from both trainees and trainers alike, although more so from the trainers who subsequently told me that they thought I was there to carry out an assessment on them. Trainees later told me that they had initially thought I was there to “suss-out whether they were suitable for the job”.

I participated fully in the programme, and like other trainees spent evenings studying for the next day's tests and, like them, always worried about whether I was going to pass the course. As Van Maanen (1988, p. 86) comments:

In the [police] academy, for example, a researcher who did not participate in the program would have been [so] conspicuous as to preclude him from asking questions that might uncover the attitudes recruits might be forming toward each other, the staff, the department, or the work itself.

Once I began working on the project I commenced my personal research journal and jotted down relevant observations and data. However, the days were usually so busy in the training school, taking down notes, listening to lectures and going through the practical elements of the course, that this left little time for noting additional information. Any hurried jottings I managed to record were usually met with curiosity from the group, and concern from the trainers, as to what I was documenting. As a result, I developed the practice of making hastily written notes in the evening, prior to commencing the study for the next day. I have documented my experiences and findings from the training school in the next chapter.

I purposely ensured that all my time was spent with the trainees in the training school, and with the transit officers on track. In turn, whilst I gained an understanding of the workings and language of the group, and of the meanings that people constructed, identifying myself with the trainees and transit officers limited the data I collected during the fieldwork to the lower levels of the security section of the RTO. However, my intention in undertaking the research was to understand the transit officer culture, their perspectives on safety, and how their communication skills developed, therefore it was 'their voices' that I wanted heard. Nevertheless, at the end of the fieldwork I also interviewed some volunteers from supervisors, management and from the training school who wanted to add a management perspective to the research. Whilst my self-imposed separation from the managers I had worked with before the research proved beneficial to achieving acceptance by the transit officers, it did create some friction with my former workmates. This is discussed further in the next chapter.

### ***3.5.2 Phase 2: Closed circuit television (CCTV) monitoring room***

When I commenced this research project, I expected the process of data collection 'in the field' to flow smoothly from one phase of the research to the next.

I expected to complete the training, follow my fellow trainees onto the track, and complete the fieldwork by conducting interviews with volunteers from among the transit officers, supervisors and managers. However, as Lee (1995) notes, research in organisations where conflict may exist often leads to having to negotiate with a 'gatekeeper'. This was the situation I encountered when trying to join my fellow trainees 'on track'. Lee (1995, p. 20) explains such situations thus:

Granting access carries with it certain risks from the gatekeeper's point of view. The research may expose unflattering or sensitive aspects of the situation, disrupt routine, or give voice to dissident elements. In addition, such risks have to be taken with relatively little information about the background or motives of the researcher and with nothing binding the researcher to protect the gatekeeper's interests.

When it became clear that the fieldwork was being viewed by the gatekeepers as problematic, negotiations took place and I agreed to add a stage between 'training' and 'the tracks' in which I would observe the work of the transit officers from the confines of the CCTV monitoring room. I believe the gatekeeper was hoping I would not want to pursue going on track after visibly viewing what officers have to deal with. My experience in the CCTV room is documented further in chapter five of this thesis.

During my time spent in the monitoring room, I was able to take copious notes, and ask questions about what I was observing without causing any suspicion from other people. However, the data collection was restricted to observing what was occurring on the screens and the answers to my questions came from the shift commander and monitoring personnel. Whilst these people were very helpful, the best way to form an understanding of an event is to be there in the midst of things. Hindmarsh and Heath (2000, p. 525) refer to CCTV cameras as 'objects' which "provide personnel with the ability to identify and discuss problems. Indeed, they often form the focus of collaboration and provide resources through which problems are managed", which was how the shift commander used them to deal with situations. However, while I could observe the body language of the officers, and monitor events as they unfolded, I had no verbal interaction with the transit officers, or the wherewithal to hear their interactions with each other. I also felt uncomfortable, since the research appeared to have become more of a covert operation, as the transit officers would be unaware that they were being watched by a

stranger. Although I was observing their actions, which would be their normal mode of operation in view of the cameras; I was also keen to observe what occurred off camera. Additionally, being only able to observe, prevented me forming any understanding of the transit officers' culture or communications skills or how they interacted with their supervisors, managers or passengers. From the perspective of the CCTV control room, it appeared that a uniform culture prevailed throughout the transit officer cadre; however, it was not until I was on the tracks that I learnt there were different subcultures between the lines.

After four weeks in this situation and further negotiations, I received reluctant permission to go on track. As Lee (1995, p. 14) points out, when attempting to gain access to a particular area to undertake an ethnographic study, "violent or potentially violent situations are often highly sensitive in the eyes of those who control access to them".

### **3.5.3 Phase 3: On track**

Having received permission to join the transit officers on track, my name was forwarded to the roster clerk to be rostered for duty in the same manner as other transit officers. Almost all my shifts were to be night shifts. I was rostered eight ten hour shifts per fortnight in the general full time work pattern. My experiences working with the officers are fully documented in chapter six. Prior to commencing on track I wanted to initially brief all transit officers on the purpose of the research, my methodology and the outcome I was hoping to achieve. I suggested to management a number of ways that this briefing could be achieved. My preference was by briefing transit officers on each line prior to their commencing duty on track. If that method was unacceptable, I suggested distributing an information sheet via e-mail to all the officers or, thirdly, making a presentation to the safety representatives from each line at the next safety meeting. However, unbeknownst to me one of the safety meetings had recently been held, and the next one would be in a couple of months; and the other two suggestions management deemed as unnecessary. My introduction to a new work area was to be an e-mail from the roster clerk to the supervisor on the line where I was rostered, indicating I would be joining their roster.

In the first couple of months on track, I was not rostered with any of my fellow trainees, or even on the same line they were working. I was disappointed. I had developed a good relationship with my training peers, so I hoped I would have been

rostered with one or more of them. I felt my acceptance by the newly qualified transit officers would have fast tracked my acceptance by other officers on track, as my previous peers could vouch for my trustworthiness. It seemed I was having to start from scratch again to develop rapport with the officers in order to win acceptance as one of them. I diligently followed the core participant observational techniques advocated by Goffman (1989, p. 126) where he suggests that:

To try to subject yourself hopefully, to their life circumstances, which means that although, in fact, you can leave at any time, you act as if you can't and you try to accept all of the desirable and undesirable things that are a feature of their life. That 'tunes your body up' and with your 'tuned-up' body and with the ecological right to be close to them, [...] you are in a position to note their gestural, visual, bodily response to what's going on around them and you're empathetic enough – because you've been taking the same crap they've been taking – to sense what it is that they're responding to.

Eventually the 'grapevine' did its work, and word got around I was not a management stooge, but was there to learn the job from their perspective. I believe the fact that I had taken the time and trouble to undertake the transit officer training was a huge positive for my acceptance by the troops.

It was not feasible to take observational notes regarding issues as they occurred on track. We were often on the move, on and off trains, dealing with issues or even just observing what was occurring. I deliberately did not digitally record conversations, firstly because passengers were around; secondly, I wanted transit officers to accept me and act as they normally would; and thirdly I intended to conduct interviews at the end of my time on track. I did however keep a small notebook in my pocket, which, when an opportunity arose, or something occurred that I wanted to make sure I did not forget, allowed me to jot down some notes, usually during a break. I had anticipated some of the difficulties I would face taking notes in the field, so prepared for this by learning basic shorthand over the preceding nine months. This assisted my ability to make quick jottings, and I used these jottings as reminders when later writing up my journal. The transit officers were aware of my note-taking strategy and on more than one occasion, after an incident had occurred, I heard "I thought that would bring the note book out". Whenever I was questioned by the transit officers as to what I was writing in my short hand, I would always read it back to them. Firstly this served to confirm that what I was



writing was correct, and secondly it gave confidence to the officers that I was happy to share with them what I was documenting. My shorthand became a source of amusement to the officers, and when there was a quiet moment I was able to teach some of them the odd shorthand words.

Working the transit officers' hours and their shifts, I quickly learnt what a powerful method of research participant observation was. I became one of them. As I became embroiled in their work environment, I felt the same injustices and frustrations that they did, and felt the same pride at a job well done as my fellow officers. Rose (1990, p. 10) refers to this as being when the ethnographer and those studied "inhabit the same historical moment". I was conscious that being fully involved in the setting as a transit officer there was a risk of taking ongoing activities and meanings for granted (Adler & Adler, 1987). However, this is more of a risk as an 'insider researcher', where the researcher has been a prior member of the group or setting (Adler & Adler, 1987; Edwards, 2002; Humphrey, 1995). I addressed this risk of 'insiderness' at the end of each shift by using my journal as a debriefing exercise, to help clarify my thoughts and perspectives from the night's events. I did find there was also a downside to participant observation. When, according to my belief, an officer did not speak to, or act appropriately in dealing with, a passenger, I would feel very embarrassed, but there was nothing I could do. On such occasions, I realised that I would be judged in the same mould by other people. I would want to shout out that 'really I was not one of them, just an observer'; but I had to accept there was nothing I could do. I was always very mindful of my position as researcher, to not jeopardise the rapport I had built with the transit officers and lose their trust, or take any action which could alter the process of events. The only comfort I received from witnessing such not-by-the-book occurrences was that transit officers accepted my presence as one of them, plus I was seeing the situation 'warts and all'.

#### **3.5.4 Phase 4: Interviews**

Towards the end of the four months on track I started asking the transit officers and supervisors if any of them would mind volunteering to be interviewed. I was inundated with volunteers from both levels. At this stage of the research, transit officers and supervisors had accepted my presence as one of them; and were keen to contribute to what they hoped would be a body of research that, if acted upon, could

possibly improve their safety at work. Very rarely did I see a manager during my time on track, and I deliberately did not contact any of them to ask about interviews until I had left the field; thereby maintaining my allegiance to transit officers.

Interviews were normally undertaken in the workplace, usually a crib room when other officers were out on track, or in a supervisor's office. I arranged to do the interviews at times when I knew it was one of the quieter periods of the shift and/or also one of the quieter days. The interviewees had to remain accessible by radio in case an emergency arose during the interview, requiring the officer to urgently assist. Nevertheless, in spite of being contactable by radio, the interviews were confidential, and lasted on average for over an hour. The whole interview was always digitally recorded with their permission and later transcribed. Hand written notes were also taken during the interviews which I was able to use to indicate any emphasis in a particular area. The foundations for my formal interview questions were my casual conversations and fieldwork experience on track, and included issues that I wanted to probe further, plus matters that transit officers wanted to raise themselves. The interviews were structured to the extent that there were broad ranging, open ended questions, as advocated by Richter and Kotch (2004, p. 7), which all interviewees were asked. I was careful to ask these questions in a manner and language that the transit officers clearly understood, and this enabled them to expand on their answers if required, through further probing (Creswell, 1998). The initial answers dictated the direction of the interview and I noted a number of the answers reflected the officers' relative experience, their previous occupation, which rail line they were on, and the experience of the supervisor on that line. It was a distinct advantage during the interviews to have completed the transit officer training and to have worked alongside the officers 'on track'. This experience provided me with an understanding of their lingo; the variance of culture between the lines; the strong sense of transit officer solidarity with their mates; and the silo mentality that pervaded each rail line. I was able to use probing questions to focus these issues and elicit further information where necessary. My previous counselling experience enabled me to use open body language; probe answers efficiently; use effective listening skills to paraphrase and reflect back their answers, which verified that I understood what they were telling me; and adopt follow-on techniques such as nodding in agreement or understanding, to keep the information flow coming.

### **3.5.5 Phase 5: Data analysis**

Due to the lengthy time I spent in the organisation, ranging from my three months in training, to the weeks in the CCTV room and my time on track, I amassed a substantial amount of data working in the field. I dealt with this information by commencing data analysis early in my fieldwork. I used the principles advocated by Bogdan and Biklen (1982, p. 145) who define analysis as:

The process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, fieldnotes, and other materials that you accumulate to increase your own understanding of them and to enable you to present what you have discovered to others. Analysis involves working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learnt, and deciding what you will tell others.

Whilst I wanted to understand the broader overall cultural landscape within the security section of the organisation, and the influence this had on the transit officer cadre, I also wanted to understand the differences in the culture between transit officers on the various rail lines. I began the analytical process by writing up my field notes at the end of a shift reflecting on what had occurred during that night. On my days off transit officer duties I would review these notes to obtain an overall sense of the data developing, and undertake a preliminary process of sorting through the data I had already accumulated, looking to identify possible concepts and themes. Agar (1996, p. 9) refers to the data in ethnography as “the practices of everyday life”. I was endeavouring to capture these practices, with the data coming from my active participation in those moments alongside the transit officers (Agar, 1996). When I moved from one rail line to another, or from one part of a line to another, I would summarise my field notes from that particular area. This enabled me later to compare and contrast the findings from the various areas where I worked. From the preliminary analysis as the fieldwork was continuing, I sought to identify concepts, along with any cognitive principles and cultural themes developing. Spradley (1980, p. 141) refers to these cultural themes as “the elements in the patterns that make up a culture”. Whilst I discovered that some of these elements and cognitive principles held by transit officers were shared throughout the transit officer cadre, such as ‘don’t dob in a mate’; others were more specific to a particular rail line, resulting in the identification of different subcultures between the lines.

I used my initial analysis of the fieldwork data, and documentation, to identify areas where I wanted to probe further in the interviews with the transit officers, supervisors and managers. Relevant sources of information included policies, procedures; general e-mails sent to all transit officers; relevant e-mails which had specifically been passed on to me by one of the transit officers or supervisors; plus formal records such as safety committee meeting minutes. It was also important to note areas where data was absent, such as accident investigations, which also informed the research concerning the importance placed by management on that particular area. Some of the interview questions were developed around specific identified concepts. It was interesting to note how various answers highlighted that transit officers and management can have very different understandings of the same issue. Leith (2008) had similar findings in his research with shop floor employees and management, in a refinery.

As previously described, the interviews were all transcribed. However, I always listened to the interview recordings again. These reviews provided a greater feeling for the intensity of the comments and the emphasis that the person answering the question placed on certain aspects of the interview, indicating areas that the transit officers, supervisors or managers found more important than others. Such information could not be gleaned by reading the transcript alone. All the transcripts were also read a number of times. The first time the transcript was read through in its entirety to obtain an overall view, and the second and subsequent times I would highlight domains, make notes from the transcripts and look for any areas of connectivity between identified themes. Where I found that a number of transit officers on a particular line had the same perspective on a theme, I felt justified in identifying a reliable representation of the culture that prevailed in that particular area. These insights and understandings gained from the interviews also validated the previous preliminary analysis of my field notes. All of these findings contributed to highlighting the areas to explore in further research, to learn how best-practice transit policing agencies minimise crime, and to reduce risk and injury for the transit officers, or transit police officers, on their railway systems.

### ***3.5.6 Phase 6: Best-practice transit policing agencies***

The analysis of the research findings provided a number of areas that I wished to explore further with best-practice transit policing agencies. I was keen to learn

what successful strategies they had implemented which resulted in their agency becoming one of the acknowledged best-practice transit policing organisations in the world. The method of identifying best-practice agencies and choosing which agencies to work with, and learn from, is fully covered in chapter 7.

These agencies all agreed to assist in my research. Prior to meeting with them I had notified each one of the specific areas of practice that I particularly wanted to cover. This facilitated the agency in preparing for my visit, enabling them to have supporting documentation available for each topic and, in many agencies, providing access to the people who specifically dealt with one or more areas of interest. During the meetings I was able to take notes and question organisation members further on any particular issue I was unsure about. All agencies visited were generous with their time, showing me the areas of the organisation that I was interested to learn about, and providing me with available policies and procedures regarding the various topics I had requested information on.

Analysing the information I obtained from these organisations, alongside the findings from my fieldwork and interviews with the RTO, I was able to develop and recommend strategies, which, if they were adopted and implemented by the RTO, could lead to a safer workplace for transit officers and improved safety and security for passengers. The final report with strategies and recommendations to the RTO is attached at appendix 4.

### **3.6 Summary**

Participant observation enabled me, as the researcher, to obtain a more valid picture of the everyday work and communication culture of RTO transit officers than other accessible research methodologies would have done. It is an interactive process which involved, in this situation, my direct participation in the workplace, building strong relationships with the transit officers to tap into “what people take for granted about their work, and thus, do not ordinarily discuss” (Jordan & Dalal, 2006, p. 368). This research method enabled the project to progress organically without being constrained by predetermined set dimensions. I was able to view safety practices from the transit officers’ perspective, which is not normally made visible through the RTO’s formal communication channels, such as accident/incident reports and safety committee meetings and minutes (Teague, et al., 2010b).

Participant observation enabled me to capture detailed qualitative descriptions of what was being observed which Geertz (1973, p. 10) refers to as “thick description”. Thick description not only enables us to understand the flow of social discourse within a group but also enables us to understand, appreciate, and think concretely about concepts implicit in the discourse. This leads to an intuitive understanding of what is occurring in that culture; enabling the researcher to speak with confidence about the findings (Bernard, 2000).

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **TRAINING**

#### **4. INTRODUCTION**

You can't start at the top and move down because then the people at the bottom will know that all along you really were a fink – which is what you are.

(Goffman, 1989, p. 130)

This chapter describes my entry into the organisation as a fledgling transit officer, and documents my journey from manager to PhD candidate to transit officer. The chapter covers the elements of training that myself and fellow trainees undertook, the development of the group culture as the course progressed, and includes my perceptions of the way in which the group gradually accepted me as a fellow trainee.

Researchers such as Schein (2004) argue that a culture is only built up over time when people have been together long enough to develop their taken-for-granted common beliefs, perceptions, thoughts and feelings that together define the group culture. According to Adler and Adler (1987), the best way to fully understand the development of these beliefs is to enter the setting as any new participant would do. Previous studies have also identified that many cultural characteristics that define law enforcement officers begin in the training school as the recruits undergo intense training and resocialisation (A. T. Chappell & Lanza-Kaduce, 2010; Conti, 2009; Conti & Nolan, 2005; Van Maanen, 1978b). Commencing the field work with a new intake of trainees, where no common ground already existed, enabled me to be part of the process as the group culture germinated and developed. This provided a rich understanding of the training methods and factors that mould the culture and identity of transit officers. As Heslop (2011, p. 327) argues, this period in training is “a process of becoming”.

Commencing the research project as a participant observer, I was cognisant of the need to discard my prior management thinking. Mastrofski and Parks (1990) have previously argued that “the most important characteristic of a good observer is a capacity to examine one's preconceptions and explore alternative

interpretations/explanations of what one observes”. Although I had previously not worked in the Division of the organisation I was about to enter, I was mindful that many employees may still remember me. I was aware of the need to “engage authentically with the community” (Drew, 2006, p. 40), and hoped my previous experience in the organisation would not impede my acceptance by transit officers.

Regardless of a trainee transit officers’ previous background all rookies complete the same three months training before graduating from the training school as a transit officer. The training covers a diverse range of subjects including law and court procedures, customer service and communication skills, radio communication skills, railway safe working rules, first aid and baton and handcuff training. The baton and handcuff training covers the skills necessary for self defence, use of force options and arrest procedures. According to Van Maanen (1988) in his research with police, without being a participant in this training it would be difficult to ask questions, really get to know and understand the trainees and the relationships that existed between the trainees, trainers and the department. I was interested to learn whether there was a difference between the theory taught and its practice, and if so, whether this could possibly contribute to the work-related injuries. Bratton, revered as one of the ‘top American cops’ by the American transit police agencies that I visited, found during his police academy training that the accepted way of doing work trumped the expected way of working (Bratton & Knobler, 1998). Although Bratton (Bratton & Knobler, 1998) was referring to events almost forty years ago, more recent researchers have found the situation still exists. A difference remains between the standard operating procedures taught in training and what actually transpires in the field (Bayley & Bittner, 1984; Beck & Wilson, 1998; Chan, 1996; Crank, 2004). As Crank (2004, p. 69) found

Standard Operating Procedure (*sic SOP*) [Crank’s term] is a typically thick manual that defines the vast array of rules telling officers what they should not do in various circumstance, representing, quipped one officer, “100 years of fuckups.” Representing the rules by which the organization seeks to coordinate its functions, the SOP provides little insight into the creative process officers use to deal with their most intransigent concerns – unpredictable police-citizen interactions.

Bayley and Bittner (1984, p. 35) argue that there is no substitute for experience in policing and that “training given in police academies is universally regarded as



irrelevant to ‘real’ police work”; referring to policing as a craft which is learnt in the field and fine-tuned as the degree of experience is achieved in the operational world (Bayley & Bittner, 1984; Chan, et al., 2003; Heslop, 2011). Undertaking the training and working with transit officers on track provided the opportunity to examine whether this theory was relevant to the transit officer cadre.

#### **4.1 Gaining Entry to the Training**

The training department of RTO is a certified registered training agency providing training and assessment of competencies for students to obtain nationally recognised qualifications. Among the competencies the transit officers obtain during their training are a level three certificate in security, a basic first aid certificate, a certificate of competency in radio procedures and a WPW07 (Safe Working Qualification). This safe working qualification dictates the limit of the tasks they may undertake in the railway reserve, which extends to three metres either side of the operating rail line. This safe working qualification is similar to requirements for transit police in other countries such as America, Canada and Britain where the officers undertake the railway safe working training after completing the basic police academy training.

With the agreement of the transit officer managers that I could join the next intake of trainees, I contacted the training school. Negotiations with the training school management took place rather hurriedly as a new school of trainee transit officers were due to start within a few days. Initially I sensed some reservations on their part that I wanted to take part in the training. However, as the meeting progressed, the trainers began to see many advantages that could evolve from the research. The trainers had a concern that once the transit officers left the training environment, no further assessment took place on the job. As far as the training department was concerned it was an unknown quantity as to whether the material the transit officers were taught in training was what they put into practice on the job. This was not the case in all other transit police organisations that I visited during the project. Elsewhere, both in Australia and overseas, newly graduated trainees leaving the academy are placed with field training officers for periods ranging from twelve weeks, for example New Jersey (personal notes on meeting with New Jersey Transit Police), to twenty four weeks in San Francisco (personal notes on meeting with Bay Area Rapid Transit Police). Whereas, one of the trainers explained to me after

completing the training in the RTO, the next time a transit officer saw a trainer was when they came back to the training school to undertake their yearly refresher training. The trainers were unable to evaluate whether what was taught was what was done, and although the officers had been passed as competent in the school, were they competent carrying out the tasks in the field?

Whilst the training school management were helpfully suggesting parts of the training they felt were more beneficial for me to undertake than other parts, I was conscious of the need to remain with the trainee transit officers at all times. The trainers had difficulty comprehending my need to do this but it was duly arranged that I would commence training with the next intake of transit officers.

Having previously worked in the building where the training centre is accommodated I was familiar with the layout of the place. However, on the first morning I viewed the building in a different light as I was venturing into the unknown. As I made my way to the lift I was greeted by numerous familiar faces all keen to say ‘Hi’ and interested in what I was doing. The most common assumption was that I had come back as a consultant, not as a poor stipendiary student undertaking research. I tried to keep conversations brief as I wanted to be in the training room with plenty of time to spare to get my bearings.

I remember feeling concerned at the time as to whether knowing so many people in the building would be a disadvantage to the research project. It did turn out to have a downside, but not the way I had expected. Having been part of management prior to leaving the organisation, it quickly became apparent that my previous peers expected me to spend coffee breaks and lunch times with them. However, on undertaking the training I made a conscious decision to avoid renewing any of my old ties and turned down all offers. As RTO is a hierarchical organisation, many people did not understand why I chose to spend my time with trainees, and in the process I offended some of those people. Van Maanen (1988) took a similar decision when undertaking research in a police academy as he believed that a strict formality normally exists between recruits and trainers and any connections with the management would be treated with suspicion by fellow trainees. The upside to my decision was fellow trainee transit officers realised that even though I knew so many people in the building, I always chose to spend my time with them. This assisted my acceptance by the transit officers as a colleague.

## **4.2 Introduction to the Organisation**

I arrived at the training room with time to spare. I glanced around the room with some despair; the room was empty. The desks had been set out in a semicircular position facing the front. There was one large file and one small file on each desk, and each set of files had a piece of cardboard with a name written on it placed at the front of the desk. There were eleven settings in total, but no setting with my name on it. A feeling of insecurity washed over me as I surveyed the room and realised I was not meant to be part of the semi-circle. How pleased I was that I had time to spare, and I decided to take matters into my own hands. I found an extra desk and chair and placed them at the back of the room where I could certainly observe all that was going on and not upset the placing already set. As I completed this bit of furniture moving the training coordinator arrived in the room with the trainee transit officers. Many of them had arrived very early (even before I had) and had been taken to the transit officers' amenities area for tea or coffee.

As the first training session started, there was no time to introduce myself as everyone quickly found their name and sat down at their appointed desk. The first part of the day was taken up with a welcome from the training coordinator, who then introduced some of the trainers, issued name badges to the trainee transit officers, covered the dress standard required during training and the requirement to keep each venue used clean and tidy. The first two days were purely an introduction to the RTO. The initial introduction was quickly followed by welcomes from one of the transit officer managers followed by the General Manager of the Division. The General Manager provided an overview of the organisation and explained to the group where the security division fitted into the whole picture. Whilst the managers were not surprised to see me and usually greeted me with a wave and said hullo, I noted these acknowledgements prompted some inquiring looks in my direction from the group of trainees. I was concerned at the impact this may have on the ethnographic study and whether it would alienate me from the group; however the trainee transit officers came to see my past connections as an advantage, as they saw them as a way of conveying any message they had to management. However, over time, as Van Maanen (1988) found in his research with police, the trainees came to realise that as a trainee I had no more influence with management than they did.

One of the speakers was unavailable that morning which allowed an opportunity for everybody to introduce themselves to the group, and provide some information about their background. Gazing around the group I estimated the group's ages to span from the early twenties through to fifties. The group consisted of nine males and two females plus myself. Their backgrounds were varied and included two 'new Australians', a couple of people with past security or police experience, and a few with military experience, either as a member of the forces or a member of one of the military reserves. A couple of the group had previously worked in customer service positions and a few of the group had martial arts expertise.

Although the training coordinator had introduced me as being there to undertake some research, it was not until the coffee break that the opportunity arose for me to introduce myself fully to the other trainees. I explained that the research I was undertaking was from their perspective, and outlined the outcomes I was hoping to achieve. We all went to the amenities area (an area that became very familiar to us over the next three months). This area also provided many opportunities for meeting other groups that were either new like ourselves, or groups undertaking refresher training. These groups ranged from passenger service attendants to train drivers.

The first day progressed with a presentation from the Equal Opportunity Commission on Equity Awareness, an introduction to RTO human resources, a talk from the RTO Internal Investigator, the completion of all paperwork and the issue of the transit officer training uniform and manual. The Internal Investigator painted a picture of how his section may become involved in an incident that occurred on the track, and explained the need to fully investigate anything that was referred to their area. These referrals could be the result of a passenger complaint, a request from the State Ombudsman or the result of a police inquiry. The Internal investigator reminded the group that "there is always someone watching you". Cameras were everywhere on the rail system and they not only recorded what passengers did wrong, they were also recording whatever the transit officer actually did. Similar to findings from other recent research with law enforcement officers, the high degree of surveillance placed on officers was emphasised many times during the training (Conti, 2009; Conti & Nolan, 2005). The Internal Investigator also highlighted the

need for good communication skills and indicated that there are some issues you can walk away from without escalating the situation. He used the example of the ‘fuck’ word. For many of the passengers who use the train this word is a normal part of the language, which they may use when talking to their friends. Depending on the context that the word is used in, it can sometimes be ignored and not escalated into a high risk situation.

Later in the afternoon the transit officers’ union representative addressed the group on the advantages of joining the union and what the union is doing for their members. The representative spoke on the transit officers’ job of providing law and order on the rail system and the requirement by RTO for the transit officers to issue summonses to passengers for non-payment or incorrect payment of fares. (It was emphasised during the training that there were no exceptions to this rule). The union representative emphasised how this situation with a passenger could escalate into a serious confrontation, for instance: if the person refused to provide a name and address; gave a false name and address; or would not follow a lawful direction given by the transit officer such as to leave the train. In addition, it sometimes occurs that when the transit officer does a name check via the two way radio using the police mainframe computer, to verify the person’s identity, it is found that there is a bench warrant issued for the person’s arrest. If the person refuses to accompany the transit officers willingly, this situation can lead to a physical confrontation to handcuff the person. Such events can result in the transit officer being injured whilst on duty. The Union would provide support for the transit officer in managing their workers’ compensation claim and could provide legal assistance if required. The union also provides support for any member should they be under investigation as the result of a complaint received by the RTO from a member of the public regarding the transit officers’ behaviour.

I was able to introduce myself to the union representative following his talk and explain my presence there and the purpose of my research. The person was supportive and highlighted a couple of issues which I made a note of to follow up at a later stage. The first was that there was not enough use of communication skills by the transit officers and secondly the transit officers needed a suitable mentor when they first go out on track. At that time, two new recruits could be put on together at a busy time on the worst line. The union representative recounted a recent incident

where two new transit officers were on duty in the delta vehicle. They were called upon to provide a rapid response when there was trouble on a train but unfortunately they could not find the station they were urgently radioed to attend.

The first day concluded with the provision of a training uniform that the trainee transit officers were required to wear for the whole time they were training; completion of the induction paperwork and the issuance of transit officer manuals. There was none for me. However, after further inquiries it was agreed that I would be provided with the manuals. Although I was not being issued with any uniform, I stayed with the group until the process was completed. I could see on their faces, and from the comments that were made as the uniform was being tried on, that the reality of what each person had embarked on had begun to sink in. This was particularly crystallised when they were issued with their official belt. As Hayden remarked “it now seems real”. This belt has holding points along its length which enable officers to attach all the equipment they are expected to carry on duty including handcuffs, baton, torch and pepper spray. As Chan et al., (2003) argue, trainees view the issuing of uniform as a significant step in their entry to the police community.

Whilst I was not overly concerned at not being issued with uniform during the training period, I was concerned that I would later be conspicuous in the field without any uniform. I endeavoured to overcome this issue during any practical components of our training on track, and later after graduation, by fashioning the clothing I wore to be as near the transit officers’ uniform as possible. This comprised of black pants, jacket and safety shoes. When on track we also had to wear a high visibility vest, which along with my safety shoes, I already possessed from my previous occupation. Although my vest did not have transit officer on the back, from the front it looked similar.

Everybody arrived early the next morning all dressed in their training uniform and with any belongings, such as their files and lunch, in their new transit officer bags. These bags were black with a transit officer badge on the front which looked very much like a police badge. (Later in the course I was presented with one of these bags, as they considered I was one of them). There seemed to be a different air about the group that morning, with the uniform on. Perhaps it provided more uniformity amongst them, or maybe they began to feel more part of the role that they

were embarking upon. Although the training uniform was not exactly like the qualified transit officers' uniform, it still had an official appearance. The group were allowed to wear their training uniform to travel back and forth to work, however the transit officers' uniform issued on graduation could not be worn outside work. Every person wearing a transit officer uniform has to be on duty at that time.

The RTO introduction continued on the second day with a large portion of time devoted to the RTO Employee Assistance Program. This section was undertaken by one of the counsellors from the organisation that provides the Employee Assistance Program. The counsellor explained to the group about the confidential counselling service they provide free of charge for employees and their immediate family members, paid for by the RTO. The counsellor then outlined the range of issues that transit officers may use the service for, and described the process of 'debriefing' that occurs following any harrowing incident that may occur while employees are at work. These incidents include suicides which can be very traumatic with body parts strewn over the rail track. Prior to showing a range of slides, the counsellor warned the group that some of the slides were very explicit and gruesome but the reality was that such events do happen on the track. The counsellor explained the cumulative effect that this sort of trauma can have on a person, the symptoms that can be experienced and the help that is at hand. In addition to the employee assistance program, the counsellor discussed fitness for work issues such as fatigue management and the RTO drug and alcohol policy which includes random drug and alcohol testing of all employees. Agreement to this testing procedure is a condition of employment for all operational staff within the organisation.

The afternoon continued with talks on the RTO telecommunications, environmental and occupational safety and health policies and concluded with a talk from the training coordinator who went through the timetable for the following days, detailing the requirement for punctuality and the necessity for the group to lay down some ground rules. Animated discussion took place within the group, with the resulting outcome being that if a person's mobile phone goes off during a class, that person had to immediately perform ten push ups. This was to occur under the watchful eye of the group to ensure there was no miscounting by the miscreant. The same punishment was also to apply to a group member for each minute that the

member was late arriving for a class, whether it was at the start of a day or following a break. Chappell and Lanza-Kaduce (2010) noted in research with recruits in a police academy, that this form of group self discipline was the start of officer solidarity as trainees begin to take responsibility and deal with the actions of their colleagues. Everyone left at the end of the day eagerly looking forward to starting the ‘real’ part of the training the following morning.

### **4.3 Rail Safeworking Qualifications**

The next week consisted of learning the theory and demonstrating competency in the practical application of the RTO safeworking rules and regulations covering rail operations. By definition, safeworking is “an integrated system of operating procedures and technology for the safe operation of trains and the protection of people and property on or in the vicinity of the railway” (Standards Australia, 2006a). These operating regulations consist of the Network rules, the Appendix to the Network Rules and the Working Timetable. These documents contain the RTO instructions, procedures and Railway By-Laws required for the operation of employees, equipment and trains safely over or near the railway line. All railway employees learn these rules and regulations to the level appropriate for their designation. The transit officer level of competency included electrification safety and awareness (the metropolitan rail system is electrified); communication protocols; the use and interpretation of radio, hand, light and flag signals and commands; operating trackside points, operating and manning boom gates; and the ability to take action in the event of unsafe situations or emergencies occurring on the rail track.

On successful completion of this component of the course, trainee transit officers are issued with a photo identification track access accreditation card stating their level of qualification. This card must be carried at all times when they are on the rail track and produced when requested to do so by an authorised person, such as a safeworking inspector or rail regulator. The trainer explained that a demerit system is in place which applies to all persons who have been accredited to work on the railway reserve. This system provides uniformity of penalties for infringements of the safeworking rules and regulations, including suspension from working on the rail system for a specific period of time for serious breaches of the rules.



The first few days were spent in the classroom learning the rules, regulations and the theory underpinning the safeworking system before we went on track to put the theory into practice. This theory included the ability to identify all parts of the track cantilevers and rails that carried the electrical components and to know what each component did; the rules and regulations on working in an electrified territory and the steps to take when an emergency occurred; or to prevent a situation escalating to an emergency. I needed to pass the safeworking components of the training myself, in order to accompany the transit officers (without a personal lookout or 'chaperone') as they undertook their various tasks on the rail reserve. If a person is undertaking any work on the railway reserve they must notify train control, and if they need to work within three metres of the nearest running line, it is an essential requirement to have a lookout in place. The lookout must be appropriately trained and qualified and their sole responsibility is to provide a warning to workers of an approaching train. We also learnt about the automatic, semi-automatic, hand and flag signals; and the manual protection of level crossings and maze ways, should the automatic system fail.

There seemed to be so much new information to absorb prior to testing and everyone was nervous, particularly as these were the first components of the course that had to be passed before going on track. In my work in the organisation previously, I had not needed to be trained in how to undertake these tasks, so I completely identified with the feeling of nerves that the group voiced, which was also communicated by a feverish delving into the notes to clarify a certain point when one of the group members raised a question during a break. The trainer was excellent and went to great trouble to try and explain everything as simply as possible, but however good the trainer was, the information still had to be learnt by the individual.

The electrification theory paper on safety and awareness was the first test that we undertook followed by the safeworking rules and regulations for rail operations. We all passed, and what a relief it was for everybody to get two of the tests out of the way. We were all looking forward to going out on track after a week in the classroom. It made the training seem 'more authentic'. We donned our compulsory high visibility vests and set out with our trainer, accompanied by a qualified lookout carrying an air horn whose job it was to warn us of oncoming trains. The lookout

stayed with us on the operating rail system for the next few days while we completed this practical training and assessment element of the course.

We learnt the difference between the various gauges of track and which was an up main and which was the down main. This information was critical to know, for instance, to pinpoint a particular location accurately when required, or even to set the points on the track should the automatic system fail. We learnt all about the different points (these are heavy movable blades which change the direction of a train from one track to the next), which are generally operated by motor, but may be required to be operated by hand. Over a couple of days we learnt how to change all the different types of point systems we would encounter on track. As the requirement for transit officers to crank points does not occur very often, the concern voiced amongst the group was remembering all this information should they be called upon to use it when working on the track. Practising this task with the trainer there to prompt us if we made a mistake is entirely different from changing the points in the middle of the night with possibly only your partner there to assist you. Further, the partner may have as little, or even less, experience.

We learnt the action to take before entering and leaving a rail tunnel such as activating on entry, and locking on leaving, the 'flashing man device'. This indicator provides an alert to train drivers that there are people in the tunnel. As we walked through the tunnel, it felt eerie. The tunnel was dark and engendered a sense of claustrophobia. There was a narrow area for people to walk and stand in the tunnel for safety when trains were approaching, however, to me it did not feel safe. As a train passed it caused quite a downdraft of air which was a bit unnerving. There seemed to be a mixed reaction in the group to the tunnel surroundings, with a few people feeling similar to myself, but the more adventurous ones saw it as an exciting escapade. Although there seemed to be so much to learn, and we knew that we were going to have to pass a test on it all, the group nevertheless enjoyed the days on the track.

Our next exercise before we undertook our practical assessments was the manual protection of level crossings: the control of traffic at these crossings, and the use of flag and hand signals. Manual protection is required when the automatic signalling system fails. A replica of a level crossing complete with boom gates (big wooden arms that descend to stop vehicles crossing the railway line when a train is

approaching) has been erected at one of the rail depots. This stands alongside a mock up of a rail carriage which is also used for the practical training of employees. The trainer demonstrated all the steps that we have to take when we arrive at a scene to manually protect a level crossing. These include wearing high visibility vests, contacting train control to notify them that we are on site, checking the time of the next train at that location, and visually inspecting the boom gates for damage. The boom gates have a failsafe system of failing with the boom arms down. Transit officers normally work in pairs which enable both sides of the level crossing to be dealt with simultaneously. We learnt how to raise the boom gate arms and lock them in position, and lower them again when a train was approaching the location. This requires constant communication with train control to gain up to date information on train movements. The trainer demonstrated the use of flags to control the vehicles during the day, and the use of a light at night. The trainer made it all look easy; however, following his demonstration and his answering all our questions, we were all given a practice run doing each step of the procedure with the rest of the group watching. This had the advantage of reinforcing the process in your mind as each person had their turn, but it also had the disadvantage that every person witnessed any 'stuff-ups'. However, as this was only a practice run, we were all learning.

Some of the group found remembering the sequence of steps to be hard, or they would forget to lock the boom gate into position, but I found the hardest part was lifting the boom gate up to lock it into place. The boom gate was so heavy!! There was supposedly a knack to it. If you could lift it up so far, quickly enough, it gathered its own momentum and sprung up, just leaving the person with the task of locking it into place. I tried and tried a number of times, but was unsuccessful. I was the only one in the group who could not do it, and was sure that I would fail. Although a couple of the other trainees struggled with it, they nevertheless managed it in the end. Eventually the trainer had to assist me get the boom gate up. I felt deflated, particularly struggling in front of the group. However, the trainer assured me that as level crossings are always manned by two people, it was quite acceptable to get your partner to assist you to lift the boom gate. There had apparently been occasions in the past when other people had also been unable to lift the gate, but passed the assessment with assistance.

Looking back, perhaps my inability to raise the boom gate after trying so hard, cranking all the points with them (which is manually intensive), and walking the track, was the start of the process of a gradual acceptance by the group as one of them. Regardless of the reason, the benefit at the end of the day was that I did not feel quite so much an outsider. However, I felt disappointed that I was unable to complete a task unaided that the others managed to do.

The next day was the practical assessment for this part of the course, with the manning of the level crossing assessment in the morning and the operation of points in the afternoon. When we arrived at the depot we were all taken to the mock rail carriage to wait until it was our turn. Mine was towards the end of the morning. As each person came back from having completed their appraisal, the remainder of us were trying to elicit from them what questions they had been asked, so we could hone up on those questions before we had our own turn. The first few of the group to return were 'playing to the gallery', telling us how difficult it was. However, it was not long before one of the group returned and put us out of our misery. He told us all that if we could just remember what we had done yesterday we would not have any problems. When my turn came along I was able to answer all the questions correctly and follow the correct procedure; however this time I asked the assessor to assist me lift the boom gate, so I could lock it into position. This he did without any problems. It appeared that everyone had passed this component so we all made our way back to the RTO building for lunch.

Our next practical assessment after lunch was to crank a set of points. The first person to return having completed this test was very kind to us all, reminding us to check that nothing was obstructing the rail points; even suggesting that we used a stick that may be lying nearby to clear any obstruction. Essentially, any obstruction prevents the points changing and can cause a train to derail. When my turn arrived, miraculously I remembered the names of the various track components, their functions, and answered all the questions accurately. I found the stone that was fouling the points and removed it; conversed appropriately with the train controller and cranked the points in the approved manner. I was thrilled to have passed the practical track work assessment and felt ready for the further challenges that lay ahead.

The next few days were occupied with fire extinguisher training, basic first aid, resuscitation skills and assessment, and familiarisation with the Emu Cab (the driver's cab of the electric train situated at each outer end of the car). EMU refers to electric multiple units where there are two cars semi-permanently coupled together. Now, due to increased patronage on some lines, there may be three or more cars coupled together. The group covered the layout of the train, and learnt how to open the train doors in an emergency and lower the train pantograph (the retractable frame mounted on the roof of the electric train which conducts the current from the overhead traction wiring equipment to power the train).

#### **4.4 Radio Operation**

This competency unit involved learning how to operate and correctly use hand held radios. Those members of our group who had previous military, army reserve, police force or security experience had a distinct advantage over the rest of us. They were already familiar with operating a hand held radio and using correct radio protocol. I noted, similar to previous researchers with police, that trainees with this previous quasi-military experience were enjoying more approval from trainers than the rest of us did (A. T. Chappell & Lanza-Kaduce, 2010; Conti, 2009; Van Maanen, 1973). The few remaining members of the group, like me, had to begin with the basics: learning how to operate a radio; correct radio procedure; and learning the internationally recognised phonetic alphabet. This system of communication links letters to words providing clear accurate communication. I later experienced on track why this clarity of information is so important. Although a few of the words were familiar to me such as C for Charlie or F for Foxtrot, possibly because I had heard them on television or at the cinema, the use of other words appeared alien, such as S for Sierra or W for Whiskey. I resorted to learning the alphabet 'parrot fashion'. We all practiced by being given a letter and trying quickly to come up with the word. The more we did, the quicker we got. Even my family was given the task of firing letters off for me to reply with the word. It all paid off, as now it is indelibly etched in my mind.

There were also distinctive phrases and codes to learn, many of which were specific to RTO. However there did seem to be logic to the use of some of these which assisted our learning. For example, 'logging on' meant 'commencing duty and accessing the radio network'. Conversely the operational codes, which provide

the ability to transmit confidential information over the radio in minimum time without confusion to the receiver, were messages communicated by a series of numbers which had to be learnt by rote. For example 'Code 12' means that the transit officers are undertaking an arrest or 'Code 10' indicates that urgent assistance is required by transit officers from all units, as it is deemed to be a life threatening situation. We all diligently learnt these, realising the significance of their use. We also learnt identity codes which were used as a means of identifying a person's ethnic background from a visual perspective. These codes were often used over the radio to the control monitoring room (CMR) when an identity check is being undertaken on a passenger. For example 'IC1' is a Caucasian person or 'IC6' is a person of African descent. The combination of visual information and the personal details supplied at the scene can be verified as to whether they correspond with the computerised information in the police database.

Although there did seem a lot to learn in this component of the course, we all found it good fun. We practiced sending and receiving messages over the radio using our acquired knowledge of the various codes and phonetic alphabet. In the practical assessment we were given a scenario where we had to liaise with the (acting) Transit Officer Supervisor and (acting) Shift Commander in the CMR using the correct radio *modus operandi*. The written assessment for the communication systems component covered the theory behind the practical use of the radios, plus the radio communication policies and procedures that were in place in the RTO.

## **4.5 Use of Force**

The next week and a half of our training dealt with the theory and practical skills required for the use of force, such as defending persons from an aggressor using oleoresin capsicum (OC) or 'pepper' spray; controlling persons using empty hand techniques; controlling persons using a baton; restraining persons using handcuffs; and employing both baton and handcuffs. This training took place at a football club where there was an oval, showers and a large room. Together these provided the appropriate facilities for the theory and physical part of the training to be undertaken. I was able to take part in the theory part of this component, however due to a physical limitation at that time I was only able to observe the physical training and assessment. Although I was initially disappointed at this prospect, it never the less provided a rich opportunity to observe the interactions between

trainers and students, as well as affording the opportunity to study the different personalities of the other trainee transit officers and observe how they handled these physically and mentally demanding days.

There were four extremely fit looking trainers all of whom had a military or police background with expertise in one or two areas of this unit. As with police academies (Conti, 2009; Crank, 2004; Van Maanen, 1988), discipline was strict during this training, and punishment was swift and hard for even minor lapses by miscreants. This normally took the form of 'push ups' for the whole group or 'push ups and squats' occasionally accompanied by a run right around the oval. Even a yawn by one of the group, or a quick glance out of the window witnessed by one of the trainers, would be sufficient to instigate at least a dozen pushups. Researchers such as Conti (2009), and Chappell and Lanza-Kaduce (2010), refer to it as police academy socialisation, which reinforces group loyalty and solidarity. Academics argue that punishing the group for an individual lapse is a powerful motivator, ensuring what is considered appropriate behaviour for a police recruit. As the week progressed the group requested me to keep a very close eye on them all, and "to act as their spy", as they began to believe that the trainers were fabricating their 'slips' to get everybody doing more 'push ups'. I felt thrilled that the group had asked me to do this, and took it as a further sign of their acceptance of me as a colleague.

I found these trainers were very focused on the dangers that transit officers face in their work environment and how quickly dealings with the public can escalate into dangerous situations. The trainers felt responsible for ensuring that all trainees leaving the course were competent to deal with any situation that they might encounter; not only to protect themselves and their shift partner, but additionally to deal with offenders appropriately. This deep concern, coupled with their martial arts backgrounds, appeared to manifest itself in the strict disciplining of participants that I witnessed during this training component. Similar to findings by previous researchers with police (A. T. Chappell & Lanza-Kaduce, 2010; Conti, 2009), trainers made it very clear to the group that they would need to lift their standards and endure the physically demanding and stressful training in order to equip them for the potentially dangerous nature of their work. Conversely our group, which had bonded together and had previously interacted well with the various different trainers (who had been from non-military or police backgrounds) in a lighter atmosphere of

banter and comradeship, were now having difficulty adjusting to the different requirements. The morale amongst the group appeared to drop. Some of the group were not quite as fit as others and found it very physically demanding, some resented the discipline expected by the trainers, and many of the group were very concerned that they were not going to pass the physical component. This was not helped by the trainers indicating the potential for violence in their work, and the necessity for transit officers to have a superior fitness to the passengers they deal with. However, the group felt their learning could be accomplished and their fitness standard achieved in a lighter atmosphere, and I heard muttered words uttered, out of the earshot of the trainers, such as 'dictator' and 'sadist'.

The theory component of this unit included our powers of arrest as transit officers; the use of force, which should only be that which is necessary and reasonable (as defined by society) to defend oneself against an unlawful assault and to lawfully achieve an arrest, or remove a person from RTO property. In a confrontational situation we learnt there were three steps to managing the issue. These are to 'defend', 'control' and 'restrain', and included the 'how' and 'when' of safely conducting a search of a person following an arrest. The instructors stressed how important communication and body language were in dealing with unlawful behaviour and that only about two per cent of the time was the use of force required. The trainer pointed out that "three seconds use of force requires approximately three hours of paper work" and underlined that it was certainly the last option to be used. He also emphasised that the batons were not to be used to effect an arrest, but were purely for our own protection and any misuse of the baton could lead to criminal action being taken against the transit officer concerned.

Our group learnt how to ensure their personal safety, to move back, anticipate and defend against unprovoked assaults and how to back up physical action with verbal communication, leaving the offender in no doubt what action was required of them. This approach would also emphasise to any onlookers that the transit officer was taking all reasonable steps to control the situation. Such verbal communication also helps protect the transit officer should the RTO receive a complaint from any person that the officer had acted inappropriately. However, it was stressed that in most situations communication skills can resolve issues and that the transit officers' approach, attitude and demeanour will often dictate the final outcome of any



confrontation. Nevertheless, the transit officers were warned not to become complacent, and to always be aware of their surroundings and where other people were located in relation to a troublemaker. However, I noted in many other transit police organisations that I visited, both in Australia and overseas, that they have moved to a more situational-specific process (personal research notes); for example the use of a 'force continuum' (personal notes) which is discussed further in chapter 6.

The RTO has a rule that any person being provided with an OC ('pepper') spray to use in a threatening situation must learn about the spray and the factors to consider before deploying it. These include how to carry and use the spray correctly; the possible medical side effects for the person sprayed, plus the care of the person once the OC spray has been deployed. After learning the necessary theory and demonstrating competency in that knowledge, the transit officers experience being sprayed in the eyes themselves. The RTO believe that it is only after experiencing this that transit officers fully understand the consequences of using the spray. Nobody was looking forward to this procedure, as everyone was aware how painful and incapacitating OC spray in the eyes could be. However, I noted as previous researchers have done, that the demanding, stressful and intense training led to increased solidarity amongst the trainees (A. T. Chappell & Lanza-Kaduce, 2010) and effectively emphasised the need to look after your partner. People were buddied up before being sprayed to assist them in reaching buckets of water to wash away the residue of the OC spray. All the trainees realised after their turn that it was not a resource to use lightly.

Everyone had the weekend to recover from the OC spraying and on Monday morning, it was straight into the physical training. Mats were placed on the floor in the hall to soften any falls during practice and every day started with a physical warm up. The various stances were initially demonstrated by the trainers and then practiced repeatedly by the group to perfect the steps, which the trainer referred to as "programming muscle memory". This practice was accompanied by a loud verbal "back off, back off" which reverberated around the room. The group practiced defending themselves, deflecting blows and getting the person onto the floor which they learnt as sequences of actions, rather than individual movements, and then moving the person ready to escort them off the premises or transport them to the lock

up. Each person took their turn at being the offender. Similar to the use of pepper spray, the RTO believe that transit officers must experience for themselves the effect of any moves that they may carry out on an offender, so that they will fully understand the effects of their actions.

This section of the training was very physically demanding, particularly as a couple of the group had previously not done very much exercise. As the day progressed, it appeared that some were beginning to think the situation was real, and would forget for the moment that it was only training. One of the transit officers developed a swollen forearm from blocking punches and many were feeling the effects of sore muscles, though no one complained to the trainers. The trainers voiced their concern to the group that they did not think that they were mastering the moves. As Conti (2009) found in his research with police, this was accompanied by shaming the individuals who were not rising to the required standard and saying they were letting their peers down, whilst reinforcing what the trainers considered to be the appropriate standards. This resulted in a number of the group remaining back at the end of the day and practising further, anxious about passing their appraisal.

The next morning an additional group of transit officers arrived at the venue to undertake their routine twelve-monthly refresher training. The experience of that group ranged from four to ten years as a transit officer. Both groups interacted well, and this was our group's first exposure to learning from 'war stories' told by other transit officers. As Chappell and Lanza-Kaduce (2010) identified, 'war stories' provide strong messages to the listeners, and these can undermine the formal learning process. On this occasion we learnt what the group newly-arrived considered the best and worst parts of the job. The best part was the comradeship that developed amongst the teams on each line; they get to know who they can rely on and who they cannot. However, they also informed our group that passengers on the trains can pick out new officers and will 'try it out on them' (hard luck stories). They informed our group that two new people can be partnered together, even two girls together. Conversely, if they were paired with an experienced officer that person might object to working with such an inexperienced recruit. By now, one of the two females in our group was concerned that she was going to be beaten up as soon as she commenced working on the line.

This particular day was spent learning to fall correctly, taking a person down, handcuffing and escorting that person; baton training which was undertaken initially using sticks to minimise any risk of injury to any of the trainees; and setting up the transit officer belt that carries all the ancillary equipment. All tools on the belt had to be put in exactly the same place each time. Again we learnt that muscle memory is relied on in an emergency and your hand automatically goes to the exact spot to reach for the particular tool that you require. All weapons go on the person's master side, handcuffs in the middle of the back and the baton with the tip facing upwards situated next to the pepper spray. Everyone had turns at being arrested and handcuffed and then doing the arrest. Today the sound of 'up against the wall' resounded around the room which was often supplemented by the trainer's 'don't compromise your safety' as some of the group got too enthusiastic in the role play.

The next day was more practice and more push ups, including extra push ups for incorrect footwork. A number of the group had sore muscles and were now sporting strapping to hands and wrists with their bodies feeling the effects of the gruelling training. The sticks were replaced by the batons, with the group learning how to pull out the baton and flick it open in one fluid motion. Practical assessments were ongoing. The group learnt how to safely search a prisoner, place them in the back of the delta vehicle and transport the prisoner to a lock up facility. Every person had practice carrying out this process, as well as experiencing how it felt for the prisoner.

At the debriefing session at the end of the practical training, the trainers expressed their concern that a number of the members of the group were barely competent in this 'use of force' area, which did not help the trainees' confidence. I later learnt, from a Canadian trainer experienced in the practical skills of transit policing, how a lack of competence in the physical requirements of the job can lead to transit officers becoming more aggressive when dealing with the public. In turn, the more competent they were, the more confidence they were likely to have, and the less aggressive they might be in confrontational situations (personal notes). However, one of the trainers did offer to spend more time with the group if they wished to contact him in the future. This did occur later, when as a group we decided that more physical training was required before going out on the track. Apparently this had never been requested by any other group previously.

## 4.6 Legal Studies

Everyone was pleased to return to the classroom and allow their muscles to recover. The next four weeks were taken up with legal studies. The first week involved learning how to identify and manage disruptive and/or unlawful behaviour. This included monitoring passenger behaviour, identifying and resolving disruptive and unlawful activity, taking the appropriate action to control the behaviour and correctly documenting and reporting the incident. Resolution techniques included problem solving, avoidance (call for assistance), smoothing (playing down differences between individuals), compromise and, as a last resort, resolving the conflict through the use of formal authority. This led into learning the background to the law.

I got caught in traffic on my way to training on the second morning back in the class room, and unfortunately arrived one minute late for the start of the class. As I rushed into the room, in unison it appeared to be, the voices were raised shouting “push ups, push ups”. Yes, the penalty was ten push ups for each minute late. Thinking quickly, I realised that to be part of the group I needed to accept the punishment and try to do the ‘push ups’ to the best of my ability. I therefore got down on the floor and commenced the exercise. The group all watched, counting each ‘push up’ out loud. As I completed the last one (after a fashion), cheers and claps erupted. This could be heard quite some distance away. Exhausted I crept back to my seat vowing to myself never to be late again.

Back at our desks, we learnt the difference between statute and common law and the legislation relevant to the RTO and our position. This included the duty of care owed to passengers; what constitutes an offence on railway property under the legislation; the various penalties that apply to each offence; and when we should arrest a person. We studied our statutory obligations and the process to abide by following an arrest, including the duty of care that we owe to the arrested person. We were taught that the more common offences we would be dealing with in the normal course of our transit officer duties would only warrant the issue of an infringement notice. These minor offences are punishable by fines, unless the person elects not to pay the fine and appear in court. However, more serious situations could arise which would necessitate the issue of a summons or, where there is no other alternative, an arrest. When an arrest takes place the alleged offender is

handed over to the police at the local lock up and required to attend court the next day.

Each piece of legislation covered in the course included a written assessment. Like most of our written assessments, they were 'open book' assessments. In spite of this I, like the other transit officers, would be asking others what the answer to a question was, to save some time looking it up. It became obvious later how important an in-depth knowledge of the law was. Many times in the ensuing months I heard transit officers say that the assessments should have been 'closed book'. This would have forced them to learn their law more thoroughly.

Knowledge of the legislation provided an introduction to the training segment on the preparation and presentation of evidence for court. We learnt how to deal with a crime scene and the rules of evidence, which incorporated establishing the facts, gathering and securing the evidence including what constitutes hearsay evidence, which is generally not admissible, and the importance that our notebook entries be clear, concise, accurate, legible, in chronological order and recorded as soon as possible after the event. We were taught how to take witness statements and to interview suspects and we learnt what rights the alleged offender had and how to take a statement from them. We practiced with various written scenarios how to compile an arrest brief for use in court the next day, and a brief for a future hearing if the alleged offender pleaded not guilty to the charges. The trainer provided an overview of presenting evidence in court and how to conduct oneself in a court Room in preparation for our practical test. By now we were all feeling bogged down by the extensive amount of law that we had to learn and even undertaking a practical assessment provided a break in absorbing the 'dry' subject we were studying. The only light relief we had during the couple of weeks was a visit to the Law Courts to watch the procedures used in the court room.

Our practical test was a simulated scenario, which was to take place in the mock-up of the rail carriage at the main rail depot. The trainers had briefed various people to act as passengers. We were to work in pairs and we were not going to be told anything about the circumstances beforehand, rather we had to deal with the situation as we saw it at the time. The scenarios would vary between each pair, which meant that we could not get advance information from the earlier pairs to develop strategies to deal with the situation before our own turn. We had to wait in

the crib room at the depot until we were called for our assessment, and at that point we had to board the train as we would if we were routinely conducting a ticket check. The situation was to be filmed and sound recorded. We later had the opportunity to view all the recordings and observe how we, and the other pairs, dealt with our particular scenario.

I was undertaking my practical assessment with Hayden who, like me, had no prior police or security experience. We were to be the fourth pair, which meant we had quite a wait before our turn. As each pair returned and we heard the 'war stories' of what they faced, we got more and more nervous. Hayden and I discussed particular strategies, such as who would take the lead role and who would radio for any assistance if required, but apart from broad concepts we were unable to do any preparation. One of the group, who had always believed that she would remain calm if a disruptive situation occurred on the train, admitted on her return that only when her scenario had finished did she realise how aggressive she had been, and commented "that the adrenalin just took over". Others reported similar reactions such as "the acting was so real that you forget that it is an exercise".

With this information in our minds Hayden and I boarded the train to conduct a ticket check. We encountered a reasonably dressed Caucasian man who said he had a ticket but refused to show it to us. No amount of reasoning would persuade him to show us his ticket. Hayden then asked the passenger for his details to issue him with an infringement notice. The passenger refused to provide the details saying that "he was a lawyer and he knew his rights". He sounded very convincing and after a while you begin to think 'maybe he is right'. As this was taking place we had to deal with interjections from other passengers. The passenger continued to refuse to give his details, refused to leave the train and we ended up arresting him, getting him off the train at the next station, where we were met by the delta support vehicle I had radioed to transport the accused man to the police lock up. Failing to provide a valid name and address when duly requested by a transit officer can constitute an offence.

It was amazing how caught up in the scenario we became, and it proved to be a very valuable learning exercise for us all. We also learnt that even if someone says that they are a lawyer, we should not feel intimidated. The exercise highlighted how important it was to know the relevant law to adequately carry out our duties. The next part of the assignment was to prepare the prosecution notice and the document

of material facts for the court appearance next day, and to prepare the court brief with our statement of evidence for appearance at trial the following week. The court case was being held in the permanently-set-up court room at the state police Academy.

We were not able to review the filming of the scenario until after the court hearing, so our briefs and statement of evidence were developed from our notes taken immediately after the event. These took the next few days to develop. In court we are not allowed to refer to the statement of evidence, so we needed to remember when and what occurred and what we had documented. The trial was run like a normal court with a police prosecutor, a judge and a lawyer representing the accused. All of us could sit in the visitors' gallery until it was our case and then we had to go outside until we were called individually to give evidence. Similar to a normal court, the lawyer for the accused could cross-examine us following our evidence. It was obvious just watching the first case that it was nerve wracking to the individual who was giving evidence and being cross-examined. We all sat in trepidation of having our own turn. However, it definitely provided a valuable experience to prepare us for court appearances in the future, and in hindsight I probably coped as well as the others.

Back in the class room we were now able to view the film of how we had all handled the various scenarios we had been given. The group were amazed at how perceptions after the event concerning what had happened, and what had been said, could vary from what the video record showed had taken place. A number of the group were surprised to see how aggressive they appeared on the film, particularly the ones having to deal with abusive passengers. This also provided a good insight into how passengers could view their actions. In a normal situation, cameras are continually running on the train, and if an incident arises that particular piece of footage is pulled up for evidence. I found in my research that other organisations hired actors, or in some cases used youth workers, to take the part of passengers; and some conducted numerous different scenario events (personal notes). When I visited the New Jersey Transit Police I found they had invested in a training simulator which enabled trainees to practice many different scenarios in the virtual realm whilst enabling the trainers to assess whether they had competently handled each situation they were presented with. As part of the simulator training the trainee had to

articulate to the trainer why they had acted in a particular manner, which aided their learning process (personal notes).

The group felt the scenario training was an effective learning tool; however more scenarios were required during the training to assist the trainees with their learning. As transit officer Peter stated:

We do the one scenario which is sort of incorporated as an arrest and also court scenario and that's all we do, we just do the one scenario....

and

...Whereas our scenario, the only outcome was arrest that was the only outcome [it could be] because it had to then lead into your scenario [sic referring to court case]. You couldn't go through any other scenario, you couldn't just remove them and that be the end of it, you couldn't caution them and that be the end of it, it had to end in an arrest. So they should have scenarios where you know, the object of the act or whatever is not to an extent that would warrant an arrest, but some other course of action to get people used to the idea that you know, they don't have to arrest people, arrest is last resort...

Or as transit officer Mike stated when arguing the case for more scenario training:

Just a lot of time wasted with stuff that's not important like how to use a loud speaker to talk, to tell the patrons on the platform like [you] don't really need to learn that, that's pretty straight forward. Stuff like that and you think you could spend that time doing more play acting or scenarios.

We now had to learn the legislation related to taking a person into protective custody and the procedures to follow when this occurred. This learning was assisted by a visit to the police lock up, where transit officers would hand over the alleged offender to the police. Having seen the facility with its extremely basic accommodation we all felt it was amazing that any person would do anything to end up there more than once. All areas of the lock up are videoed and recorded. A number of offenders could be allocated to each cell which had a toilet in the cell visible to everybody. We viewed what is referred to as the 'green room'. This is a padded room where violent or disturbed offenders are placed. The green refers to the padding on the walls. Apparently, a number of police have remarked that many of the transit officer arrests end up in the green room. No reason was given for this



tendency. The visit also covered where to park the delta vehicle to take the prisoner in to the facility, as well as the paperwork that was required.

To celebrate being a substantial way through the training the group decided to have a get-together at the weekend, including their partners. Sam volunteered his place for the event and Hayden volunteered to take and set up all his karaoke equipment. Everyone was going to pitch in with the food and take what alcohol they wanted to drink. I was delighted to be invited. It was great to see the entire group out of the work setting and to meet their partners. It was a very enjoyable night and I was certainly accepted as one of them. The karaoke was in full swing and I ventured to have a turn myself. Unbeknown to me, Hayden was recording all the singing. As I entered the class room on Monday morning the recording of my singing was put on loud and clear. What an embarrassment, I sounded absolutely terrible and as if I had had far too much to drink, which certainly was not the case. Of course, it was also played for the trainers to hear. However it did provide some light hearted banter to start the day.

#### **4.7 Customer Service**

A lot of time was now devoted to learning about the implementation of revenue protection measures which include the checking of tickets, knowing the various fare zones and concessions that apply, and the issue of infringement notices to passengers who cannot produce a valid ticket. The last part of our training consisted of a number of basic elements of the course which, like the time devoted to ticket checking, fellow trainees referred to as “a waste of time”. These included subjects such as telephone techniques; the transit officer code of conduct; ticket zones and the time taken to travel from one zone to another; fundamental issues such as personal hygiene, and presentation; working effectively with others; making a public announcement; good customer service which included mapping a station; disability awareness including the practical component of putting a wheel chair on and off a train; quality systems; and working with people from socially diverse backgrounds. As transit officer Mike later told me in an interview:

Through training I was just going ‘this is ridiculous’ and you waste your time on... . I can’t even remember some of the stupid things they did, like going around mapping a train station, as you know. Why go and map one train station, what good is that going to be when you get out of the train; that took a whole day to do...

...But the whole day could have been spent doing scenario training or going to the police academy in their scenario training [or] even put us through riot training at the police academy just so they can get your adrenalin pumping and feel what it's like to work in a group.

For most of us, the most interesting part of these rudimentary segments were short addresses from male and female Aboriginal police officers on Aboriginal culture, suggesting a few strategies we could use which could assist us in any interactions with their people. We all found the presentations interesting and educational and wished this segment was longer.

We were now down to the last few days and everybody was looking forward to finishing in the classroom and beginning work on the line. We spent an afternoon on counter terrorism awareness and were presented with an overview of the RTO emergency management manual. We spent a day on drug awareness which included the signs and symptoms of drug use. A further day was spent on the barriers to communication and learning what factors contribute to effective listening skills, the use of open and probing questions, and a brief introduction to conflict resolution strategies. The trainer referred to the content of this unit as “common sense stuff”. We were divided into pairs to practice, and took turns in role playing a difficult customer. This gave us the opportunity to develop our skills at producing a win/win situation to reinforce the theory about resolving conflict. However, as a group, we felt that this unit was skimmed over, leaving us without in-depth skills in this area. As one of the more experience transit officers later told me:

They don't do it now, they don't do tactical communication. Well that's what they need to bring in. They need to bring the tactical communication in because a lot of the people we talk to, you can solve that situation through communication. It can be solved just like that (click of fingers). And it does work; we did it with Praxis [sic. Previous training consultants] and I found it very, very useful.

This view was supported by many other experienced transit officers, who subsequently remarked to me that the newer transit officers were now graduating without sufficient verbal skills to deal effectively with difficult customers.

## **4.8 Graduation**

Everyone was excited at finishing the classroom training although nervous at what lay ahead. It was interesting to note how some trainee demeanours altered once

the uniform was put on. As one of them stated “it makes you feel powerful”. The training coordinator cautioned the group against letting their ‘ego’ take over when out on the track. He advised that people’s egos could be dented by being personally verbally attacked or ignored, and that a dented ego could make a transit officer feel that “I’m going to fix this guy right up” or “I’ll show you mate”. I later heard these sentiments echoed by some of the more senior transit officers on track, such as transit officer Rory:

Some of them go in. They think because they get a uniform they think they’re super human. That’s not the way to deal with the public. You think you’re Superman when you put this uniform on. You’re not!

We were advised that the trick is to remember that it is a role that you are undertaking, and what an aggrieved person may be saying is attacking the role, not you personally, one trainer remarked, “the uniform provides you with anonymity”. Conti’s (2009, p. 411) view with all violent police/citizen incidents is that they “are the result of status threats whereby the officer’s demeanour toward the civilian and its reciprocation are either generating or suppressing conflict”. Conti (2009) argues that this perception aligns with previous research with law enforcement officers which found it was important to ‘maintain an edge’ to protect personal safety while acting in the role. The importance of role differentiation was endorsed by one of the group who had previously worked as a policeman saying “you have to build up a resistance and learn to differentiate between work and outside”.

The final morning was taken up with the issue of the full transit officer operational uniform and equipment. I was not issued with uniform or any equipment, which included passes to the transit offices and a key to the dead end of the railcar which is used as a ‘safe haven’ at times when an officers’ safety is threatened. At the time I felt this exclusion was a disadvantage; however it did have one upside. The trainees viewed this situation as management treating me badly. I was often told by them that “You are doing the same work as us; so you should be given the same things” (personal notes). I had become affectionately known as the ‘token transit officer’. A group photo followed with every graduating trainee in uniform. I felt very honoured when the group insisted that I was part of their official graduation photo, even though I was not in uniform.

The afternoon was taken up with the presentation of a graduation certificate and a group photo for each person, presented by a member of the communications department. The group was disappointed that the General Manager of RTO Train Operation (their head of department), the General Manager of Security (their head of branch) and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) were all unable to attend the presentation. No one in the group had yet met the CEO or General Manager, Security. The training coordinator addressed the group and emphasised that “the job is as hard or as easy as you make it”. He pointed out that if you looked smart and professional you were less likely to be picked on than a person who did not take pride in their appearance.

After congratulations were said all around and evaluation sheets on the training were completed, we departed the classroom for the last time. As I left the building proudly clutching my certificate and group photo, I reflected on all that had occurred during the past three months and how different I had felt when I entered the building on that first day of training. I was now ready for the next phase of my field work, joining my fellow trainees on track. However, as Adler and Adler (1987) found, initial entry in to the field does not necessarily provide continued acceptance.

## **4.9 Summary**

As a group, we were initially surprised that a number of the trainers referred to the transit officer unit as a para military organisation. However, over the three months’ training I was to learn that in many respects transit officer culture mirrored that of law enforcement officers. The military model prevailed; defining the person in uniform and reinforcing a culture of obedience, regimentation, solidarity, conformity and also pride in their position (A. T. Chappell & Lanza-Kaduce, 2010; Conti, 2009; Crank, 2004). Our trainee cohort had bonded well in a supportive environment and as one of the trainers pointed out during our last week, there was a level of warmth amongst our group. He cautioned against “taking too much of that warmth out on the line, as you have to be accepted”. These remarks caused some concern. Over the previous three months a good comradeship had developed and whilst the trainer was saying this for our benefit, it caused people to have some fear of what lay ahead, wondering about the culture they were about to enter, and what it would be like.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CENTRAL CONTROL MONITORING ROOM**

#### **5. INTRODUCTION**

Having completed all the training I was keen to commence working with the transit officers. However, as described in chapter three, there was a problem about obtaining permission to join the officers 'on track'. The manager was concerned that I would experience the full extent of the anti-social behaviour and violence that transit officers are exposed to and deal with on a daily basis; and argued that the research could achieve its objective by my spending time in the central Control Monitoring Room (CMR), and later talking to transit officers, without putting my safety at risk. As previously documented, the CMR is the room where operators monitor the closed circuit television (CCTV) cameras located all over the railway system. Although there is no personal interaction with transit officers from this location, I agreed to spend time in this environment in order to progress the research. This chapter documents my experience, observations and learning achieved during this process of watching the cameras from the confines of the monitoring room.

Over recent years a growing concern amongst developed nations regarding security in public places, including transport systems, has seen an increase in the use of surveillance cameras as organisations strive to improve safety and combat crime (Smithsimon, 2003; The Economist, 2007; Williams & Johnstone, 2000; D. Wilson & Sutton, 2004). The RTO is no exception, with cameras installed on all stations, platforms and railway infrastructure (Acott, 2011). Whilst concern abounds from citizens that the use of these cameras are an invasion of personal privacy, governments and organisations have continued to view them as an important weapon in the fight against crime and public disorder. They argue that CCTV coverage will eventually be so widespread that we will take it for granted. On the other hand, the concern demonstrated by citizens continues to be fuelled by provocative media headings such as "You'll never walk alone" (Coleman & Sim, 2000) or "Learning to live with Big Brother; Civil liberties: surveillance and privacy" (The Economist, 2007, p.72). Wilson and Sutton (2004, p. 225) argue that the use of CCTV is controversial because of its capacity to "interrogate, control and marginalise", creating further fractures around social and economic divisions. As a result, public

opinion has tended to be polarized on whether CCTV cameras are an invasion of privacy or a necessary tool for public order.

In recent years there has been emergence range of qualitative research projects which examine the work of employees who are systematically coordinated by managers from a distance (Goold, 2003, 2004; Heath, et al., 1999; Sanne, 2008). Often the researchers may remain unknown to the participant workforce in the research. Even so, I wished to undertake the research with the transit officers as a participant observer. Working directly with employees provides an understanding of the complex organisation relationships between work practices, workers and organisations (Bechky, 2006; Contu & Willmott, 2006; Orr, 2006). I felt that to fully understand the transit officer culture and communication practices I needed to become part of their culture, rather than view their work from afar. Whilst Walby (2005, p. 191) believes CCTV video images are “a form of text which is central to the coordination of peoples’ activities” and “subsequently plays a role in reproducing social relations”, many other researchers recognise the benefits of participant observation in qualitative research (Bechky, 2006; Contu & Willmott, 2006; Orr, 2006).

## **5.1 Commencing in the Control Monitoring Room**

A compromise was reached with management. The short time I had spent in the CMR during the transit officer training, had been during the day. However, the majority of the transit officers’ work is at night, when the face of the rail system changes with the different passenger demographics using the system. This is when the role of the transit officers comes into its own. Anti-social behaviour and violence become far more prevalent at night as different subcultures claim centre stage. During the day customer service assistants provide help to passengers, with a skeleton crew of transit officers in delta vehicles available as back-up support on each line. Unlike transit officers, customer service assistants do not have the responsibility for dealing with law enforcement and any anti-social behaviour on the rail system. Ticket checking is mainly undertaken by revenue protection officers employed specifically for this function. As I had previously witnessed night-time work during a few shifts of ‘on job training’, I agreed with the transit officer manager that my induction to night life on the urban rail system would commence with a month spent in the CMR, giving an overview of the type of situations I could

encounter on track. Whilst initially I had not factored this into my research timetable, the experience gained during this month proved beneficial.

Following my meeting with the transit officer manager, it was agreed that I would begin my observations the following day, commencing work in the afternoon and working through until the last trains had reached their destinations. The control monitoring room observed in this research is the central security hub of the metropolitan rail passenger system. The entrance to the control room is not evident or accessible to the general public and control room operators enter and leave the building through swipe card access. The link between the CCTV control system and the transit officers is the Shift Commander who is responsible for the operational management of incidents in both the control room and on the railway reserve. The manager said he would notify the Shift Commander that I would be commencing work with them the next night. I was given the telephone number of the Shift Commander to ring when I arrived outside the door, and he would let me in. Strict security regulates entry to the monitoring room, and this is essential to maintain standards and protect the integrity of the system.

Arriving at the entrance to the CCTV room to commence my first shift, I telephoned the number I had been given. I stood there waiting for what seemed like an eternity watching the activities occurring at the main city station, not knowing at that stage that I was being watched. I later learnt for security purposes that a camera was permanently focused on the outer entrance of the building to observe all persons wishing to enter the CMR. Eventually the door was opened by the Shift Commander inviting me in to the inner sanctum. Inside the first door is a lobby complete with table and sign-in book for all visitors to complete. The inner entrance to the CMR is also security controlled and accessed by the use of an authorised security swipe card. Formalities having been completed I was invited into the CMR, introduced to the three staff watching the monitors and then given a desk to use. Like other control monitoring rooms, the railway CCTV operators sit surrounded by banks of video monitors displaying images transmitted from cameras situated in the areas under surveillance. This provides the operators with the ability to monitor activities as they are occurring on stations, platforms, car parks and other railway infrastructure and assets. Similar cameras can be found and used in diverse situations such as shops, watching for shop lifters; hospitals, monitoring patients; streets, for

monitoring public disorder; with one of the main uses of these cameras being for security purposes (Goold, 2004).

## **5.2 Overview of the CCTV System**

The Shift Commander, who sits at the back of the room directing operations, provided me with an overview of his role and explained the workings of the CCTV system. The system includes an incident management and recording process with cameras that are capable of producing video evidence and still images in a format and quality suitable for presenting as evidence in court. To maintain the integrity of this evidence, the system also includes an image storage system. Station premises which have an office have cameras which can be operated locally; however, the CCTV operators can operate all cameras remotely. This level of remote control enables the operator to change from one camera to another on a station, change stations, change the angle on the camera or zoom in or out of a situation, or pan left or right as required. Importantly, the operator also has the ability to communicate with people on a station if the situation warrants it, and passengers can communicate with the operator by pressing an emergency button located on the platform. I later also saw how this system could be abused by passengers. If the passenger requires assistance, the operator can view the situation and determine the appropriate actions to be taken. Using the cameras, the operator can monitor a person or group who may have attracted their attention, keeping them under surveillance until they have left an area. However, researchers who investigate surveillance operations argue that a disadvantage of this capability is that it can lead to abuses such as racial profiling, the harassment of gay people and sexual voyeurism (Goold, 2004; Smithsimon, 2003; Wells, et al., 2006). Although, I saw no evidence of this occurring in the railway environment. However, at a time when many people fear the creep of CCTV cameras into every aspect of their lives, they also accept that there are many advantages. Using the cameras can facilitate more effective deployment of the police, transit officers and/or emergency services to areas where a problem is occurring. The CCTV system also helps authorities to solve crimes and catch offenders, who often plead guilty when presented with the visual evidence (Williams & Johnstone, 2000).

Initially, CCTV cameras were introduced into rail organisations as a means of monitoring passenger activities, to protect passenger safety, and to safeguard the



organisation's property, infrastructure and assets. The organisation, like many other organisations, hoped CCTV cameras would act as a deterrent to crime by increasing the fear of detection and aiding the prosecution of petty crime, graffiti and vandalism that occur at stations and adjoining car parks (Coleman & Sim, 2000; Williams & Johnstone, 2000). However, CCTV does not always solve the problem. The *West Australian* daily paper, for example, depicted a youth spray-painting a train and captioned the photo: "The teen doing this was convicted of graffiti-related offences. He received just forty-eight hours community service. Is it any wonder they keep doing it?" (Jones, 2008a, p. 1). Further into the paper was another picture showing a youth admiring his graffiti on a computer. That article was headed "Young vandal revels in the adrenaline rush of his graffiti spree" (Jones, 2008b, p. 7). Later in my research journey, I learnt from the American Transit Police in the cities that I visited, that there is a vast international culture of graffiti artists who will go to extraordinary lengths to get their work seen, photographed and put on the internet. Workers in the CCTV centre argued that much harsher penalties are warranted to increase the deterrent factor and reduce the incidence of these graffiti offences and petty crime on the railway system.

Regardless of whether an individual camera is manually switched to a particular station, all cameras continually record all activities around the clock and can be replayed later if required. This facility is often called on to assist police with their inquiries when a person of interest may have used the rail system. This occurred a number of times while I was working in the CMR. My initial introduction occurred on the first night in the control room. A young Asian lady was waiting to catch a train on her own at an unmanned station, when another lady, of a much bigger build, approached her, produced a knife and tried to steal her handbag. In trying to get away from her attacker, the young Asian lady fell backwards off the platform onto the track. Luckily no train arrived at that time. The attacker ran off the platform to a car driven by an accomplice who was waiting to pick her up. The monitoring room operator was alerted to the situation. The Shift Commander notified the police and immediately ordered the transit officers, who were patrolling the line in the delta vehicle that night, to attend to the incident. Whilst the station was not being monitored at that particular time, the cameras were still recording all activities. The camera operator was able to replay the video so the police could

obtain an accurate image of the attacker and the getaway car. The same couple carried out a further two assaults elsewhere that evening before being apprehended by the police. The police were able to use the images to alert other officers on duty to the appearance and details of the perpetrators and also used the images as evidence in the ensuing court case.

I also witnessed the police using our surveillance system in different circumstances. Around midnight on one particularly cold Saturday night, when I was observing the activities in the control room, a request came through from the police to actively monitor events on a particular station. The police had received a call from three anxious young women requesting assistance as they were being harassed by a group of males. The operator immediately switched the camera feed to that particular location and could clearly see three young women, scantily clad for the cold winter night, sitting on one of the platform seats laughing and talking, showing no signs of distress and with no evidence of any males in the vicinity. The operator then observed one of the of the young women use her mobile phone to make, what we later learnt, was a phone call to another police station asking for their assistance. The Shift Commander announced to the girls that they were under surveillance, and that they would be kept under surveillance until the train arrived. Police often receive mischievous requests for assistance, particularly from young women who are looking for a lift home. In this instance, the operator was able to use the CCTV cameras to monitor the situation, saving the police attending a fraudulent call for assistance.

### **5.3 Observing Night Life on the Rail System**

Watching the monitors in the CMR provided a rich picture of the behaviour of people from different socio-economic groups and the variety of problems that transit officers faced in dealing with some passengers. Although the anti-social behaviour and arrestable offences were evident on all four lines, it became apparent that the type of problem and occurrence rate varied between the different lines. For example, research conducted by Cooper et al., (2007) on the [South] line, which services one of the less advantaged areas, identified that “some young people stay on night trains because it is unsafe for them to go home, especially at weekends”. I later met these young people when working on that line. Each night they would be there, sometimes they would meet up with mates at various stations for social interaction,

usually catching the last train home. The ages of these children appeared to range from about ten to fourteen years. They normally bought a student day ticket which enabled them to travel all night. However, as Cooper et al., (2007, p. 17) suggest, groups such as this “may be perceived as threatening to others”. Although this particular group of youths are aware that there are cameras around, they are not apparently perturbed by this. They feel safe on the network.

On the other hand, Homel et al.,(1992, p. 679) comment that the “fear of random, unprovoked violence from strangers now has a major effect on the lives of many ordinary Australians”. Such fears are exacerbated by groups of young adults loitering in public places and people will stay away from areas where they perceive they may be subjected to intimidation or violence (Bromley & Nelson, 2002). I noted that the operator monitoring the CCTV cameras is able to pinpoint any potential anti-social group and bring it to the attention of the Shift Commander, who will alert transit officers to any problem situations and deploy them to that area. While CCTV coverage is clearly important, two stations were completely without cameras during my fieldwork. One of those stations was only used when special events were on at the show ground, and the other station, where trains regularly stopped, was being rebuilt resulting in cameras not being available at that station until the building was completed. Later in the research I learnt that the building had been completed and cameras are now operational again.

The CMR operators pointed out other areas of concern with the cameras. In one particular location the camera was pointed at a notice board, and in a new underground station a number of the cameras required adjustment to provide full coverage of the area. Upon enquiry, I learnt from the managers that the station had still not officially been handed over to the RTO by the contractor. As a result, due to warranty issues, the cameras could not be altered until such time that it was completely under RTO control. Later, when I was working with the transit officers, I learnt that cameras were a source of frustration when they were not working, were incorrectly placed, or were not installed. Transit officers viewed this failure of CCTV coverage as compromising their safety and many times I heard the remark “management does not care about our safety”.

Transit officers find a couple of northern line station CCTV locations to be of particular concern. At one of these a bus interchange area is located on the top of the

station and passengers alight from buses to enter the station. Whilst transit officers are expected to monitor and deal with any situations that arise, there is no camera located in the interchange area. This leaves transit officers unable to view any trouble brewing, while camera operators are unable to monitor any passenger interactions with transit officers, or with other passengers. I later observed a safety representative at one of the safety committee meetings that I attended raise the issues of cameras at bus interchange areas. The manager advised that the area was beyond the direct control of the RTO Train Operations, as the area belonged to RTO Buses which was a different division of the RTO. RTO buses did not want extra cameras installed (Safety Committee Minutes, March 2008). The repair of cameras was a further source of frustration for the transit officers. This is undertaken by another division of the organisation, and transit officers believe that delays in maintenance and repair compromise their safety. This is discussed further under maintenance of equipment. I later learnt that transit officers view corporate management as one entity, and do not believe that demarcation issues between divisions of the one organisation should be allowed to jeopardise their safety.

Goold (2004) in his research on the way that CCTV has been integrated into policing organisations and practices in southern England, found in all areas that there was a positive impact on the police's perceptions of their safety. In police-led CCTV monitoring operations, police officers were able to provide a quicker, safer and more efficient response to incidents as a result of being able to assess the situation unfolding on the monitor in the control room (Goold, 2004). Such video information provided details of the incident, including "the nature of the disturbance and – where there is a possibility of violence – prior knowledge of which individuals are particularly dangerous" (Goold, 2004, p. 172).

Privacy is a modern right; however public surveillance is now a fact of life. As Goold (2002, p. 24) states, "we draw a distinction between being watched by a visible police officer and a CCTV camera mounted on the side of a building". People do not know if somebody is watching them, or who that person may be. This leaves citizens wondering if they are being watched by people with ethical standards, or a person with voyeuristic tendencies. Knowing that information, they may choose to change their behaviour (Goold, 2008). It became obvious when I was in the monitoring room that many passengers were unaware that they were under

surveillance. Numerous times I noted that when the Shift Commander made an announcement to passengers on a platform to stop a specific behaviour, the passengers concerned, usually youths, would look around to see where the voice was coming from. Not seeing anybody, they would continue the behaviour they had been told to stop. This could vary for example from drinking on the platform, damaging property, jumping on to the tracks, etching markings into paint work, graffiti, smoking, to being generally abusive or fighting. One particular episode brought home to me how naïve some people could be. Some youths failed to stop drinking when requested to do so by the Shift Commander, and were then warned that transit officers were on their way. The perpetrators actually started changing clothes in an attempt to confuse transit officers with any description they would have been given. The miscreants obviously failed to realize they were being watched the whole time they were doing this.

When incidents occur on the track the Shift Commander is the overall ‘Chief’ or ‘Person in Charge’. He is in radio contact with all transit officers and can immediately deploy them to a particular location if required. The control room personnel also have a close liaison with the police, including access to the police mainframe computer, and direct contact with police communications. These resources enable the Shift Commander to request immediate back-up from police, if and when required. Access to the police mainframe computer is not hardwired, but enabled via a satellite connection. A number of the people I worked with in the CMR expressed concern that this link can result in the computer crashing at a most inopportune moment. As the police rail unit is situated immediately above the office of the CMR, staff feel that it would be logical and simple to directly hardwire the CMR computer to the police mainframe computer. This would ensure the availability of important information when required, and alleviate transit officers’ concern that their safety could be compromised if the wireless link were compromised at any point.

The Shift Commander is the only person authorised to access the police mainframe computer and uses this to check issues such as the identification of passengers of interest, their age, whether there were any warnings listed for the person such as ‘drug addict’, psychiatric illness, HIV positive or whether there were any ‘bench warrants’ out for their arrest. When the transit officers encounter a

problem with a passenger, which can range from having to issue a fine or summons to arresting someone, they need to get the person's details. They radio the required details through to the Shift Commander, who checks the description and details provided against the information held in the police mainframe data base. Although transit officers try to use the radio away from passengers, so that other people are not overhearing what is being said, this is not always possible. As a result, the various codes we learnt in training are used during the radio transmission. For example, a code seven is a suicide or a code ten is send all available transit officers to help us or, as I later heard aptly described by a transit officer, "it really means we are in the shit". If the Shift Commander wanted to convey personal private information on a passenger, such as "be careful the person is HIV positive", "has a suicidal tendency" or "watch for needles is an intravenous drug user" or even "has a history of assaulting a public officer", the Shift Commander would request the transit officer to phone him. This ensured that no other person would hear what the Shift Commander was saying. Each pair of transit officers had a mobile phone with them when out on track. The information shared through these individual alerts to transit officers related to precautions they should take to deal with the person safely, not only for their own protection but also for the person's protection.

I was pleased that I had learnt the language of coded alerts during training or the 'lingo' as the transit officers called it. While listening to the radio transmissions, I was able to understand what was happening. Although operators are able to view proceedings on their cameras, verbal exchange is limited to the transit officer radio contact person in the CCTV room. Radio communication between the transit officers and the CMR is essential for safety. The strict protocols we learnt in training were usually adhered to by the transit officers, between themselves and with the control room. This also extended to the phonetic alphabet which the transit officers used when conveying people's names over the radio, preventing any misunderstanding on the spelling of the name. As I listened to the radios, it was fairly easy to pick up which were the newer transit officers on the line, usually they were the ones that were much slower in phonetically spelling out a person's name. However, there were exceptions to this such as the transit officers with previous military or police backgrounds.

The radio channel is open to all radio users on the same rail line, so other transit officers in the team can listen to what is occurring elsewhere. However transit officers are not the only people using the radio. Problems can arise when other people, such as customer service assistants (CSA's) or revenue protection officers use the radio for banal, trivial issues such as "can you bring us some milk when you come down here"? (personal notes, 2007). Although Supervisors told me this practice was not acceptable, the situation sometimes still occurred. This caused transit officers great concern. They felt their safety could be compromised by one of these people using the radio channel at a critical time, and believed they should have their own dedicated channel. As transit officer Mike related to me in an interview following a serious incident

You've got the Shift Commander telling them 'keep the airways clear' and then you're still hearing them about five minutes later 'oh Rev 1 where are you?' 'Rev 2' .. it's like, 'far out, if you want to organise your crib break get on the phone!' because that's all they always do, 'what's your location?' It's like, can't we just issue them all phones?

Similar sentiments were echoed by many transit officers during the interviews, such as transit officer Keith

I mean we've got a lot of other organisations using the radios at the same time, and I think they should, for non-operational issues ... be on another channel. And I'm talking about CSAs and those sort of things, they should be on another channel. Because at the end of the day, really our safety is really about our communications to the Shift commander or to other transit guards.

Each day when transit officers commence duty they are all issued with a radio. The first task the pair of transit officers undertake is to log on with the CMR, giving them their radio number and their assignment for the night, for example delta vehicle patrol, train duty or station duty. The operator in the CMR records all this information. Any time the pair book off track for any reason, they have to notify the CMR and log back on again when they recommence on the track. This enables the Shift Commander to be aware of where everybody is placed on the system. This also occurs if the transit officers are booking off track to take a prisoner to a police lock-up. They notify the control room operator that they are going off track and the time and mileage of the delta vehicle is noted. When the transit officers arrive at the 'lock-up' they again notify the CMR operator who again notes the time and the new

mileage on the vehicle. This information is logged onto the CMR daily running sheet, which can be accessed as evidence should a complaint be made by an alleged offender that a transit officer did not act appropriately in some way when transporting them.

My admiration for transit officers grew as I observed via the monitors in the CMR some of the difficulties they faced. Prior to my arrival on one of my shifts, two transit officers arrested a man at the City underground station. I watched the replay of the film and realised the difficulties transit officers faced with some of arrests they undertake. The particular gentleman arrested was of large build, and exhibited super human strength at the time. It appeared from his behaviour, and from reports by the transit officers, that he may have been under the influence of something, possibly drugs. The transit officers succeeded in arresting the person, and because of his condition transported him to Royal Perth Hospital to be checked by a doctor before taking him to the police lock-up. I learnt that the doctor on duty at the time refused to examine the person of interest until police arrived with tasers. I could not help reflecting how much easier the transit officers' task would have been if they had also had access to equivalent weapons.

Some evenings/nights were uneventful for the transit officers, but everyone knew that Friday and Saturday nights (and on some lines Thursday nights after late night shopping) were normally the busiest times of the week. Watching the night's activities unfold on the monitors highlighted the diverse range of skills that a transit officer requires. When a transit officer arrives at work they have no idea of the sort of issues they may have to deal with during the course of their shift. Whilst this provides variety, it can also be stressful. I witnessed the extent of this when I saw the CCTV system used in tragic circumstances. A suicide occurred on the tracks just outside one of the stations. When such a situation occurs the nearest transit officers are radioed to attend the scene immediately. Although our training does try and prepare us for such circumstances occurring, until the situation arises no one is quite sure how they will react.

When a person is run over by a train, passengers are taken off the train and the train remains stationary until the coroner has attended. The transit officers' involvement in the situation can range from: escorting passengers off the train to the nearest station; assisting in line clearing, including locating body parts; to, manning



a level crossing. This occurs if the stoppage of the train has caused the signals to fail-safe and the arms of the crossing are down, stopping the traffic. On this particular occasion, two transit officers were already on the train and additional transit officers were called to deal with the situation. Buses are organised for passengers until rail services can be resumed on that line. However, there is normally a delay until the buses arrive. On this occasion, the passengers on the platform were aware that an emergency had occurred; nevertheless, in spite of announcements being made, the transit officers were subjected to abuse from a section of the public and a number of the passengers kept pressing the emergency button complaining that their train was late. When this happens cameras are automatically focused on the platforms by the operators to ensure that no one is in difficulty, requiring assistance. Additionally, the operator carefully explained to passengers that buses were on the way and that the button was for emergency use only. Despite this, a number of passengers continued pressing the emergency button until the Shift Commander eventually warned them that they would be fined. I felt disgusted by this passenger behaviour and yet the transit officers I witnessed on the monitors appeared to remain calm and polite even under pressure.

I learnt from the CMR operators that they have to undergo a medical which includes a psychological assessment to determine whether they will be able to cope with distressing situations that they may witness whilst on duty. On this particular night the suicide occurred just outside the station, but on some occasions a suicide can occur at an actual station which can be witnessed by the CMR operator. At present the average rate of suicide is about one a fortnight. Additionally, accidents can occur at a station resulting in similar situations. I learnt from the CMR operators that occasionally a passenger may take a short cut across the track to catch their train, and get hit by an express train going in the other direction. Whilst the organisation recognises the effects of post traumatic stress on operational personnel dealing with a traumatic situation, and provides compulsory psychological debriefing following such an event, this does not extend to the control room operators who witness the event from afar. However, I noted while I was in the monitoring room that the operators had developed a macabre sense of humour, which appeared to be their way of dealing with the stressors that confront them.

When I was in the CMR I swiftly learnt that what initially starts out as a quiet night can change dramatically. One night, whilst I was watching the cameras and monitoring what was going on, I heard over the radio a very concerned transit officer voice calling for urgent back up. The situation was out of view of the camera, but we learnt that a person was threatening to commit suicide by jumping off the overhead bridge on to the railway tracks below. Further in to the research I had the opportunity to interview the transit officer concerned, who had felt frustrated in dealing with the situation as he wished he had more knowledge of how to deal with the mentally ill and said

I found it quite difficult because not so much the attempted suicide but the person I was dealing with was sort of psychotic and had a lot of mental problems and I was trying to get through to him which usually works for me in dealing with people. I think that's one of my stronger points in talking to people and trying to calm situations down. I was just unable to do anything. The guy just wouldn't listen to me and everything I seemed to say just seemed to arc this fellow up even more, so I felt a bit helpless in that situation. We were able to stop him taking his life but not being able to get through to him was probably a bigger thing for me.

The Shift Commanders that I worked with during my time in the CMR came from transit officer/policing backgrounds, were skilled in dealing with passengers on a local level, plus were experienced in directing operations from the central control room. From their command position they see many issues which concern them. One such situation that they were very keen to tell me about regards the use of emergency vehicles. I later found this concern was also mirrored by the transit officers and their supervisors on all of the rail lines on the system. When a code 10 is called over the radio by a transit officer, everybody on the same radio frequency knows that their colleagues are in danger. The police are notified and all available transit officers are immediately dispatched to the location to assist the transit officers in distress. The 'delta vehicles' are driven by transit officers that patrol the line for that shift and are equipped in a similar way to police emergency vehicles, complete with flashing overhead lights and siren. However, transit officers are not trained or authorised to drive the emergency vehicle in any manner other than complying with normal road rules. This means that they cannot use the flashing lights or siren, nor are they authorised to travel at speed. The transit officers are aware that their peers are in trouble and want to get to their aid as quickly as possible. Any

communication over the radio by the transit officers in trouble can be heard by those going to assist, and their sense of urgency to get there is high. I heard many tales from transit officers over the ensuing months of journeys to aid ‘their mates’, where they risked travelling over the speed limit which potentially could result in a fine or the loss of driving demerit points. Additionally, without advanced driving skills, they risked having an accident plus they risked being disciplined by management for not complying with the law. As Tracey, one of the transit officers told me “I lost four demerit points and copped a large fine, but I would do the same again. Next time it could be me that needed the help”.

Later, I observed this concern raised by a transit officer safety representative at the transit officer safety meeting. These meetings are required to be held on a regular basis in accordance with the occupational health and safety legislation, which also dictates the makeup of the committee as having an equal number of elected safety representatives and management ("Western Australian Occupational Safety and Health Act," 1984). The manager stated that “the police would not authorise the vehicle’s use as an emergency vehicle” (Personal notes, 2008). Transit officers argued that similar vehicles such as Alinta Gas or volunteer fire fighters were classed as emergency vehicles and could use their flashing lights when attending a call-out. They felt that their circumstances were far more serious and warranted further investigation. However, one of the managers closed the subject indicating that nothing further could be done and the matter was ‘out of their hands’. The manager declared that turning the lights on while in transit to a situation was contrary to road laws and would not be endorsed (Safety Committee Minutes, March 2008). This was a big issue for the transit officer safety representatives who had to report back to their members and who felt that their concern was being dismissed without further investigation.

## **5.4 Transit Officer use of the CCTV System**

Although we learnt during training about how to use the surveillance system as a safety protection for ourselves, I was able to see the implementation of this from the CMR operators’ perspective. We were taught in training to remain with our partners and when approaching a person of interest to notify the CMR operator to put the cameras on us to observe how the situation developed. As transit officer Jo told me

from experience you never know what's going to happen, someone might be looking a little bit dopey and stuff and the next thing you go talk to them and they see someone in uniform and start swinging and you end up with a fist in the side of your head all because you went over there a little bit complacent.

The surveillance system provides a defence for transit officers particularly as they approach the possible offenders and deal with the situation that confronts them. The transit officers report that some 'trouble makers' are quick to complain that they (transit officers) act inappropriately in one form or another, such as assaulting them. Where there is a complaint, there is always an investigation, regardless of whether the complaint appears to have substance or appears to be ill-founded. The video record of the encounter provides some evidence of what occurred which can offer protection for the transit officers in the face of vexatious complaints against them.

I also witnessed that the monitoring of transit officer behaviour extends to any interviews with an alleged offender conducted in a suburban station office. There are roll-up shutters around the windows of the office which transit officers are required to open on entry. A station camera is then focused through the window to monitor activities occurring in the room, providing a record of the actions taking place. While employees in many occupations might regard this surveillance as an affront to their professionalism, the transit officers have been taught to request it, and the majority of the time view such observation as providing positive evidence for a court case if the person is charged; as well as being a protection for themselves, and a necessary part of the job. However, Goold (2003, 2004), in his research with police officers found that some "had heard stories of officers being prosecuted for unlawful arrest or assault on the basis of CCTV evidence – stories that had left them anxious about being watched and the possibility of their own activities being scrutinized" (Goold, 2004, p. 180). As one officer interviewed by Goold confessed

It affects our thinking of things a lot because obviously the cameras are there to identify possible crime about to happen, or even people who are actually committing crimes at the time. But having said that, it also records police actions. Therefore when you arrive at an incident, you've got to be aware of the fact that the cameras are watching you. We are being recorded, the same as anybody else. Therefore what we do has to be right, it has to look right. Therefore it makes it quite a priority for most officers entering the town centre – they're thinking, 'I'm on camera' (Goold, 2003, p. 194).

In only a small number of the interviews that Goold (2004) conducted were officers advised by their shift sergeants or local inspectors to use CCTV for their own advantage, for example providing useful evidence, and for their own protection against complaints about the use of unlawful or excessive force. Officers mainly were just warned to remember that they were being watched by CCTV cameras when they were in the town centre (Goold, 2004). Conversely, in this study I found that transit officers are encouraged to view the cameras as a tool: to provide evidence in a court case; to summon backup support if warranted; and to provide a record that is available for analysis of the situation in accident and incident investigations. The Supervisor is able to view the footage, investigate the incident and recommend any training modification or corrective actions to be taken to prevent a recurrence. The capacity for a supervisor to review an incident provides support to the transit officer that their actions were appropriate for the circumstances. Although they are not currently used in this way, the videos and subsequent analysis could also provide an excellent learning tool for transit officers on other lines not involved in the event. As Hugh, one of the experienced transit officers, later explained during an interview with me, he has a range of strategies when directing a person to leave the station

I make sure my hands are always open like this (*showing out-stretched palms*) and always making sure I'm giving directions. It's all on camera. Directions always [...] direction, direction, direction. Don't push; don't push, because if you push, that's technically assault. Because you physically haven't placed them under arrest, they're actually leaving the station. If you give them a little bit of a shove, you're in trouble. They can have you up for assault.

Should the person refuse to leave the station, or the situation deteriorates to the point that the person gets arrested, the camera footage can clearly demonstrate that the person was told to leave the premises and had not followed the transit officers' direction. The person would not be able to claim that they had not understood what the transit officer meant.

However, as Goold (2003) found in his research with police, I also noted that transit officers sometimes expressed concern that the cameras can work to their disadvantage. If an incident develops out of sight of a camera or before the CMR operator has been alerted to a confrontational situation, cameras may not have captured the initial evidence of what took place. This can result in an escalating confrontation between a transit officer and a member of the public being captured,

but not the initial circumstances that led to the event. Some members of the public are quick to complain that a transit officer caused the situation to escalate or that the transit officer used excessive force to arrest a person. Investigations can leave transit officers feeling distressed and compromised by a system that did not pick up the initial behaviour of the passenger/passengers, leaving the transit officers' subsequent actions open to criticism. As Ray, one of the transit officers, later said to me in an interview

I was a little disappointed with some of the comments made by management that came to me, and the fact that a decision was basically made on the incident without getting my feedback and my opinion sort of thing. So they've looked at the footage and go well, that's shit, he's stuffed up, so that operator (*sic transit officer*) needs his arse kicked. And that was before I'd even been contacted about it to talk about the incident, sort of thing. So the mind was already sort of made up on it. I was a bit annoyed and a bit disappointed by that. And one of my comments was 'well, I was there, you weren't' sort of thing.

Even when the entire incident has been captured on camera, a transit officer can feel that it does not portray the event favourably for them, as Ian recounted to me during an interview

And basically it was one of the first times when a person has threatened me and I believe that they were prepared to carry out the act and I wasn't prepared to risk injury to myself to prove anything to anyone. And I warned him quite clearly on several occasions that his actions would result in being affected by pepper spray and he continued.

So it wasn't the best looking footage in the world and it wasn't the most text book arrest in the world but I felt that there was enough there to justify it, but a few people disagreed with me.

One of the things that quite annoyed me is I've dealt with a lot of offenders since I've been here and a lot of them have threatened me and I've just [gone] yep, no worries. Most people walk away as they're doing it and get louder and tougher as they walk, as you saw today. But this person is actually standing there, both fists clenched, shaking his hands around, moving side to side, like really trying to shake me up and that's seen on the camera and they still told me that I did the wrong thing.

At times watching the monitors it was difficult for me to distinguish between the revenue protection officers and the transit officers. Both wore very similar uniforms, the difference being the colour of the writing on their arm badge and

transit officers wore cargo pants which the revenue protection officers did not. I learnt that this was also a matter of concern for the transit officers as they felt that looking so alike, particularly when on camera, could compromise their safety. Later, when working with the transit officers I found the issue was a 'hot topic'. As transit officer Peter told me during an interview, he had personally raised the issues with a manager and basically got told

that it was an ego thing for us and I said it wasn't an ego thing, it was a safety issue [...]

I was pretty pissed off about that comment. And I thought that the way some guys carry on about it probably is an ego thing, but the bottom line is it's a lot more than that, Xyz because an incident happened in the city and transit officers went to it and they could not distinguish on video who was transit and who was Xyz, so they had no idea who was who, which is a major concern. Another incident where an officer has called for backup on a train and the guys have got off and just stood there, and he didn't realise that they are actually Xyz officers, so he effectively had no backup. He thought he did but he didn't.

## **5.5 Summary**

Observing the monitors, particularly at night, provided a rich picture of the different problems that confront the transit officers on the various rail lines. The railway passenger demographics alter as the young (and not so young) emerge to forget work and party the night away. Hobbs et al., (2003) include this phenomenon in "the night-time economy", which involves restaurants, clubs, bars, concert venues, night clubs, gambling establishments and the people who work in and patronise them. The CCTV system enables known potential problem areas such as stations near pubs and night clubs, to be kept under close surveillance at appropriate times, particularly at closing time or prior to the departure of the last train. Chaney (1998, p. 54) believes that during this night time period "the pursuit of happiness becomes the only bench mark of value". Alcohol – which is very much part of the Australian culture (Homel, et al., 1992) – becomes the drink of choice, which Hobbs et al., (2003, p. 36 - 37) state

aids consumers in abandoning their regulated and constrained daylight personas and immersing themselves in the comparatively ambiguous and chaotic culture of the night. Alcohol consumption provides both a culturally and legally sanctioned way of altering behaviour, and it is this opportunity to enjoy legitimized 'time out' in

the form of hedonistic forms of experiential consumption and identification, that renders the night-time economy so alluring to young people

Many of these people travel by train, which can result in transit officers having to deal with the anti-social or unsafe behaviour resulting from their excessive consumption of alcohol or, in some cases, drugs. At times when watching the cameras this can be quite worrying, such as the occasion when a surveillance camera was placed on a crowded platform at a station which is located near a well-known night club spot. All the young adults on the platform appeared to be in high spirits and many appeared to be intoxicated. As we were watching the monitors, a young lady dropped her handbag onto the track. A young gentleman immediately jumped off the platform onto the track to retrieve the bag for her. A train was due to arrive at any moment. The Shift Commander immediately made an announcement to the station for the gentleman to get off the tracks as a train was due to arrive. We anxiously watched as the gentleman retrieved the bag and climbed back onto the platform with only seconds to spare. It was lucky that the situation turned out well, but it could have had a disastrous conclusion.

Whilst the time spent in the CMR provided me with an overview of the many problems and circumstances that the transit officers have to deal with, I nevertheless felt a sense of frustration at being unable to hear the communication between the transit officers themselves, and between the transit officers and passengers. The only transit officer verbal communication I could hear was the formal, essential information provided over the radio to deal with the issues current at that time. This situation did not convey any awareness of the culture which prevailed on the various train lines, nor did it provide any knowledge of circumstances preceding a transit officers' request for a camera to be focused on them. I had not been discouraged by gaining an understanding of the situations I would face with the transit officers out on the lines; rather I was anxious to progress to the next stage of my research journey. Having completed the requirement placed in my path, I again made an appointment with one of the transit officer managers to negotiate permission to join the transit officers on track.



## **CHAPTER SIX ON TRACK**

### **6. INTRODUCTION**

The degree to which one is an “active member” affects the extent to which this sympathetic understanding is possible, and this is a function of one’s social location

(Fine, 1993, p. 281)

This chapter provides an overview of the working life of transit officers gained during the four months I worked alongside them on track, and examines the safety culture and communication practices that these officers adopt as they go about their daily work activities. Further, the chapter highlights differences in the cultures of the transit officers teams on each line that became evident to me over this period. These discrete line teams resulted from a management decision in 2007 that officers be allocated to specific lines. Transit officers were initially asked to nominate their preference of line to work, and where possible these preferences were granted. Where a line had too many people nominated, a waiting list was commenced. At that time, rosters were changed to an eighty hour, eight day working fortnight, with any additional time, worked as overtime such as extra time worked on a Friday and Saturday night, or an additional day. This rostering plan became affectionately known as the X plan, signifying the four lines running from the central city to the outer suburbs. A fifth line was added during the research period, however the ‘X plan’ name remained. Although management acknowledged the rostering system was more expensive, requiring additional transit officers, they felt that the benefits of line-specific teams outweighed the extra costs of the initiative. In particular, management felt there would be reduced absenteeism, a reduced injury rate for transit officers, officers would not feel so isolated and a supervisor would be present on each line to provide operational support (Transperth Train Operations, 2006). Additionally, transit officers would become familiar with the regular passengers on their line, leading to a better community relations with passengers; they would learn who their trouble makers were, and become familiar with the officers they were rostered to work with on that line. Transit officers welcomed the change. As Mike stated

I'd much rather work on a line because you know all the stations, you know the people you're going to deal with unless they're blow-ins but usually you know the regulars and you know the staff you work with as well; and from a safety perspective that's a good thing to know that someone is going to have your back or not.

Many transit officers were now able to commence duty near where they lived. This greatly reduced their commuting time. However, where transit officers had become familiar with a particular line, and have formed a bond with other officers on the line, they were reluctant to move. As Patrick said

I actually prefer the Port line. I live way north and it's a long drive, it takes me an hour to get to work every day, but I prefer Port. It's a good mix of passengers: lots of tourists and stuff out this way. And I'm sort of the person where once I get settled into a position I don't really like to move around. I'm pretty comfortable here now so I don't really want to change. So that's another one of the reasons why I like it and it's quite a scenic line, you're right near the ocean and stuff which is a good thing for me as well I think.

Or, as Jo said when other officers kept asking him why he does not work on the northern line near where he lives

Because I don't want to, because I much prefer working on this line. I like working with the guys that I work with here. I've worked with these guys for years now and we've got a good working relationship, we've got a good rapport, the morale is quite high even on this line compared to the others. I can't really speak for the other lines but we've got quite a good morale here, we keep on boosting each other up and I really like that.

The majority of the officers preferred the eight-day working fortnight (personal notes). The bulk of shifts commenced at 14.45 hours, in time to monitor and control the behaviour of school children that use the public transport system. Problems with passenger behaviour on the transit system mainly occur with children after school, and with adults in the evening and night. When day time commuters have reached their homes a different demographic of passenger emerges to travel the rail system at night. The officers work until the last train has reached the end station and passengers have left the station and car park. This is usually around 01.00hrs on Sunday to Thursday and 03.00 hrs on Friday and Saturday. Any arrests or issues that have to be dealt with result in a later finishing time.

During the day, passengers are generally well behaved so only a skeleton crew of transit officers work. These are based at the City station, the inner City

underground station, and the City Convention Centre station, with a transit officer crew in a delta vehicle (mobile) on each line, ready to respond to any situation that may occur. Until the majority of the transit officers commence work in the afternoon passenger ticketing assistants and customer service assistants, who possess no legal authority to respond to trouble, provide any assistance required by passengers. The introduction of the X plan also saw the deployment of a separate revenue protection team whose sole function was to provide a ticket enforcement role. As they have no responsibility for customer service, there is no ambiguity with their role. However, since they have a fare enforcement function and are dressed like transit officers, they provide a visual deterrence for any anti-social behaviour by passengers. Revenue protection officers also provide a 'monitor and report' function which can be acted upon by the transit officers in the mobile response vehicles, and transit officers are empowered to take action against anti-social behaviour (Transperth Train Operations, 2006). The uniform worn by the revenue protection officer has implications which will be discussed later, however.

When I commenced my fieldwork on the lines the new rostering system had been in effect for over a year. It became evident as I moved from line to line that the groups on the various lines, apart from the newer Bay line, had already developed enough of a shared history to generate their individual culture. Whilst the literature denotes that it is leaders who establish the culture of an organisation (Hopkins, 2007; Kotter, 1999; Schein, 1992) by emphasising priorities and allocating appropriate resources, it is well known that people within organisations actively construct their environment to best deal with the conditions that they face (Chan, et al., 2003; Paoline, Myers, & Worden, 2000). These values and behaviours are usually transmitted to subsequent recruits as new employees want to fit in with the social norms of the group they have joined (Kotter, 1993). These values and behaviours are rarely if ever discussed (Simpson, 2004), however Schein (2004) argues that the definition of culture will only give us the structural nature of culture, it does not identify the issues that lead to the assumptions and values that the group develop. I was keen to uncover these in my quest to understand the culture and the safety values that the group on each line held as important.

The nature of transit officer work means that transit officers frequently face the public when the public are manifesting their worst behaviour. Passengers may be

disrespectful and/or resistant to the officers when they communicate with them, particularly if there is evidence of any wrong-doing on the individuals or group's part, or they may exhibit a lack of self control as a result of alcohol, drugs or mental illness. Whilst the manner in which transit officers interact with members of the public is strongly influenced by rules, regulations and procedures; previous researchers of police interactions with the public have found that the greatest determinant of an officer's reciprocal dealings with an individual or group, is the civility or incivility that the person or group directs towards them (Fielding, 1994; Mastroski, Reisig, & McCluskey, 2002).

Police tend to stereotype people (Bayley & Bittner, 1984), and have a negative view of some citizens (Manning, 1978; Skolnick, 1985; Terrill, et al., 2003). Manning (1978) found this negative view provided them with an endless supply of material for the stories and jokes frequently told by police amongst themselves. Similarly, the transit officers' compendium of stories was vast. Even so, Fielding (1994) refers to police stories as being exaggerated. I learnt that transit officers did not need to exaggerate the stories they told, the details of actual events and incidents were enough to capture a person's attention as they recounted them. Although I found transit officers sometimes expressed highly prejudiced or negative attitudes in in-group talk amongst themselves regarding cultural or social groups and citizen interactions, similar research previously undertaken with police (Cruse & Rubin, 1973; Waddington, 1999) has indicated that such attitudes are not translated into action. Echoing this, transit officers generally dealt with people professionally and in a consistent manner. Nonetheless transit officers, as previous researchers have found with police (Chan, 1997; Manning, 1997; Reuss-Ianni, 1983), can appear uncaring and may seem cynical and hard as they learn to cope with society's dislocation and the daily hostility that they face. As Eddy told me:

People that do mess with me are drunks, and people on drugs, so that makes it harder. You can't get through to them. You try to talk [...] what else can you do; and you are just trying to talk to them and people just, yeah, they kind of get to you.

Reuss-Ianni (1983, p. 4) refers to police cynicism as "alienation resulting from the inconsistencies in the variety of jobs they are exposed to, lack of resources and compromises they must make". However, I also found the officers were exposed to frequent verbal profanities and verbal abuse such as 'plastic cop', 'wanna be cop',

‘failed cop’, ‘transit pig’ (personal notes) or as Nola reported to me following a particular incident, “I’m going to fucking kill you”. Profanity appeared to be a normal mode of speech of many of the people they had to deal with. I felt at the end of my fieldwork that I was also becoming hardened and cynical after dealing with these people over the previous months. As transit officer Steve told me:

I can tell you one hundred per cent that the person that you are when you come into this job is not the person you are when you leave this job no matter what; you can get desensitised, you get hardened, you become a different person. I think your compassion goes out the window pretty much because you deal with the worst of society. Anyone who says the general public are nice people haven’t worked with the general public.

Transit officers invariably lose their non-transit officer friends, partly due to the hours that they work; partly due to the fact that they feel only other transit officers will understand what they have to deal with on a daily basis; and as Skolnick (1985, p. 81) found, a policing role makes them “less desirable as a friend”. As many officers told me, their line team become their mates and family, as they all work and socialise together. Marcus summed the situation up: “It’s like a brotherly type thing, you’re not working with friends you’re working with family, so it’s a good bond that we all have”.

The literature on police culture indicates group loyalty amongst officers is a defining aspect of their working life (Chan, 1996; Crank, 2004; Loftus, 2009; Reuss-Ianni, 1983). This cultural phenomenon was similarly reflected by transit officers. This strong loyalty was emphasised in Parliament by the Hon Troy Buswell Minister of Transport after talking to two seriously injured transit officers following a widely publicised incident: “They are extremely proud of their job and the level of professionalism they display in what they do. Remarkably, all they want to do is get back to work so that they can help their mates” (Western Australia Legislative Council, 2011a, p. 1). Following the introduction of the X plan with each line developing its own distinctive culture, transit officers bonded together and became protective of fellow officers on their line. I frequently heard comments such as “make sure you cover your ass” and “you don’t rat on your mate”. I witnessed this taken to an extreme as an officer altered his online statement at the request of a colleague, whose behaviour may otherwise have been questioned. The officer changing his statement later told me he felt uncomfortable, but was ultimately

prepared to cover for a mate who had not followed procedure. Manning (1978, p. 87) explains this phenomenon

The manipulations of the rules that takes place among horizontal cliques, typically partners in an area, car, crew in the reserve room, or a team of people working plain clothes, allows participants to decrease the uncertainty in rule-enforcement and to protect themselves so that things don't come back.

As well as loyalty to their mates, the officers also took pride in their particular railway line leading to group boundaries being developed. The transit officers on each line thought their line was the best with comments such as this one from Peter "better group of guys, pretty much got the line under control, have done since the X plan started". Another transit officer defended the passengers on his line as being the best, explaining in very blunt, transit officer terms "they [transit officers on other lines] look down on our line, but at least our scum know they are scum, which is more than their scum do".

While there were many advantages to the allocation of transit officers to specific lines, the X plan has also brought about a number of silos, as Rory stated:

Everybody's jealous, like the Northern line have got their own little group, we've got our own little group: South line have got their own little group. You've got the Bay Line that's just started up. Port line have got their own little group. So everybody keeps to their own selves.

As a result of these silos 'what happens on the line, stays on the line'. The X plan culture does not provide the opportunity to learn from incidents that have occurred on other lines. Rather, the culture has developed where transit officers on one line protect their 'own' and may make fun of the way transit officers on another line handle a particular situation. If any analysis of an incident occurs, the findings are not used as a learning tool and shared with other lines to prevent a similar incident occurring elsewhere. This separation of experience is perpetuated by management who do not allow transit officers to view the footage of an incident that occurs on another line. Any violation of this ruling is subject to disciplinary procedure (Safety Committee Minutes, June 2009). However, research indicates that organisations with a culture of safety use incidents/accidents as a learning tool (Brooks, 2005; Hopkins, 2006b; Reason, 1997); analysing the contributing factors to the incident and developing strategies to prevent a recurrence (Brooks, 2005;

Reason, 1997). In the RTO environment communication amongst the transit officer cadre normally only occurs in a vertical direction, with any communication horizontally occurring via 'the grapevine'. This often results in misrepresentation of the facts of a situation, and in the officers involved in an incident being the subject of criticism or ridicule by other lines. This will be discussed further under communication.

The cultural demographics of the passengers on each line varies. As James explained about the Northern line

A lot of it is to do with the standard of education [of passengers]. The northern liners, they think they know everything. They think they know the law, they think that their Dads and their lawyers can get them off. They always hit you with, 'My dad's a lawyer' and all this sort of thing. So they think they know it all on that line, but they don't really. Whereas on these lines you don't get that sort of thing. We deal with a lower economic type people. They really can't afford to go to court.

Or as Caroline explained, when saying why she liked the South line

It's a little, you know what you're dealing with. The people you're dealing with on that line. You know, they know their place, you know their place and they all, there's an understanding there. And you have probably a lot more trouble on that line but that's solely, usually with families or domestic cases like domestic arguments and things like that. Not so much, yeah, not too bad. And juveniles being drunk and what not. I suppose it causes more things to happen on that line.

The officers on the East line passionately believe their line is the best and that they have their line well under control. There are more senior officers on that line, and some of these have not put in for promotion as it would mean moving from the East Line which they do not want to do. They have come to know their passengers well. As James stated

We've got senior people on this line and the people on the East line and staff have been here for three or four years and so the local people actually know us by first name. We know a lot of the locals and the people by first names so that's a lot to do with it. It's actually getting to know the users of your line and the ones that will misbehave when transit guards aren't around. I reckon that's really what it is.

Archie put the situation more bluntly

In the East line you seem to know, excuse the expression, 'shit bags' and you know your 'pieces of crap'. But you also build up a rapport with them sort of thing as well. So even though they're 'pieces of crap' they'll say g'day to you, that sort of thing.

In contrast, passengers on the Port line were a constantly changing group with tourists, backpackers, university students, sailors, day trippers and party goers travelling the line at night and on the weekends. However, whilst the transit officers did not get to know their passengers as well as other lines, many of the officers enjoyed the variety of passengers. As Wayne remarked

A lot of areas along there is very popular among the tourists so I think that's the most pleasant line to work on because you're just dealing with a lot of international tourists, Japanese, European, this sort of thing and they're all quite easy to get along with and you have problems, but it's not on the scale as say the North line.

## **6.1 Transit Officer Role**

Along with the passenger ticket assistants, customer service assistants and revenue protection officers, the transit officers are often the first point of contact for passengers on the RTO rail system providing information and help to passengers if required. They also provide the frontline of deterrence for any anti-social behaviour that occurs on the system. Transit officer core functions are passenger safety and security, and to minimise fare evasion (Public Transport Authority of Western Australia, 2002). In order to accomplish these tasks they derive their powers from the *Western Australia Public Transport Authority Act 2003* ("Public Transport Authority Act (WA)," 2003), *Western Australia Public Transport Authority Regulations 2003* ("Public Transport Authority Regulations (WA) ", 2003), and the *Western Australia Government Railways Act 1904* ("Government Railways Act (WA)," 1904). The powers they derive from the *Western Australia Public Transport Authority Act 2003* align with aspects of the *Western Australia Criminal Investigation (Identifying People) Act 2002* ("Criminal Investigation (Identifying People) Act (WA)," 2002), *Western Australia Young Offenders Act 1994* ("Young Offenders Act (WA)," 1994) and sections 70A, 74A and Section 445 of the *Western Australia Criminal Code Compilation Act 1913* ("Criminal Code Compilation Act (WA)," 1913), relating to disorderly behaviour in public, trespass, and damaging property. Additionally, through definition as 'an authorised officer' in the *Protective Custody Act 2000* ("Protective Custody Act (WA) ", 2000), transit officers have



powers under the act to apprehend persons for their own safety, for the health and safety of any other person or for offences committed on RTO property. They may use reasonable force to apprehend persons of interest during an arrest. These pieces of legislation became ingrained in our minds during our training. However, the powers and authorities transit officers receive from all these pieces of legislation are only applicable on RTO property (Public Transport Authority of Western Australia, 2007c).

The focus of the transit officer role has oscillated over time from what was previously a policing role to a more customer service role to a combination of both, back to a more policing role. As a result of the initial purely policing role, a number of transit officers are authorised to exercise broader powers than those listed above. These officers were appointed as Special Constables in the past by the Chief Executive Officer of the PTO under the *Western Australia Public Transport Act 2003* ("*Public Transport Authority Act (WA)*," 2003). Special Constables are transit officers who within the limits of the Authority's property, shall have, exercise and enjoy all such powers, authorities, and immunities, and be liable to such duties and responsibilities as any duly appointed member of the police force" (Public Transport Authority of Western Australia, 2002, p. 2.2). Although most of these Special Constables have left over the ensuing years, or moved on to other positions within the organisation, some of them still remain.

The changes in the transit officer role have caused some disquiet with the transit officer ranks. As one officer summed it up

A long time ago management said this was mainly a customer service job. Then they changed their views and bring it back as a security position and they sort of get caught in between what sort of people they're looking for, whether they want big Brutus sort of people to do the security, or they've got to try and get a fine mix sort of thing. It really comes down to who they employ in the job

These changes in the focus of the role have at times, resulted in a greater emphasis being placed on customer service training, instead of law enforcement. As David explained, some

guys that came into the transit officer job were expecting to be in a full-on customer service job where they had people that had come from banks and supermarkets that had never done any sort of security background work in their lives. The first time they dealt

with someone that didn't want to be dealt with they copped a punch in the mouth and didn't like it obviously.

## **6.2 Transit Officer Duties**

Transit officers can be rostered for their shift to undertake train riding duties, station duties or delta vehicle (mobile) duties. Their shifts are rostered over a fortnight and normally comprise a variety of the three roles. The majority of transit officers commence work at the end stations on their allocated line. However, some of the officers are rostered to staff the busier stations along the lines the majority of which, similar to the end stations, are also bus interchange areas. The end stations house the supervisor's office, the transit officers crib room, their shower and change facilities and, in some instances, a gym which the transit officers' have got together to equip and use. The facilities located at the intermediate stations usually comprise of an office and toilet facilities, and in the newer or recently upgraded stations, a crib room.

The transit officers arrive on duty in time to change into their uniform, and set up their rig belts holding accessories such as baton, pepper spray, torch, handcuffs, gloves and first aid kit. They clean shoes in some instances, and get ready to be addressed by their supervisor at the commencement of the shift. Apart from the officers who are rostered for duty at an intermediate station and start their shift there, the remaining transit officer shifts commence at the end stations with a briefing from their supervisor.

Traditionally, policing has developed on paramilitary lines with policing organisations characterised by quasi-military features notably based on discipline and hierarchical control (Auten, 1985; Chan, 1997; Crank, 2004). I found the transit officers followed these same characteristics even to the point of using similar terms. For instance, at the City main station, radios are collected from the 'Quartermaster's Store'; the briefing at the start of the shift is referred to by transit officers as a 'muster' where, similar to a military organisation, all the troops gather together to get any instructions before embarking on their duties for the night. Any information that needs to be passed onto the officers occurs at that time. However, I noted during my research that the quality of these briefings varied from line to line and also from supervisor to supervisor. Some of the briefings were virtually nonexistent and were mainly 'a gossip fest'. As James told me

They don't – like I don't know what's happened today. No-one's told me anything. They never tell you anything. Nobody tells you, you've got to go and find out yourself. Like if you want to know what's happened today before I came on duty you've got to go and find out. So there's no way of asking.

There's not [a] hand-over from musters or anything. Any major incidents on the other lines. There's no look outs to be kept for, and when there are, they just go from day to day and hope somebody picks whoever up somewhere along the line.

However, one of the elements of a positive safety culture is to keep people informed as to what is going on in their organisation and to learn from incidents that have occurred (Helmreich & Merritt, 1998; Reason, 1997; Standards Australia, 2006a). I noted this routinely occurred at muster time in the high-performing interstate and overseas transit police organisations that I visited. These benchmark systems used the muster to pass on any organisational information, any alerts for look outs to be kept for persons of interest, what had occurred on the previous shift and would also include any information to be learnt from previous incidents. Additionally, in some of the organisations visited, the officers would be required to sign that they had received the information. In contrast, in the RTO, a number of transit officers felt the flow of information was not occurring and believed that the musters should be documented, so that supervisors would become more accountable for safety issues raised at these gatherings. These officers felt frustrated when they raised a safety issue at a muster. The supervisor would say that he would follow it up, but nothing further would happen and they would not receive any feedback. As Harold said, who had raised the issue of spare uniforms to change into if theirs became stained with blood as a result of a conflict on shift dealing with a possible offender, or attending an accident victim “If it was documented on the musters that information [about a request], management has to see it, they have to provide for us, it's safety equipment”.

However, in some situations supervisors did follow up on issues and used the time to inform and educate officers. As Wayne told me “There are some supervisors that are really good at what they do”. He went on to say

Every day he'd [the supervisor] come in and he'd discuss any issues going on and he'd say 'look this is what is going on on the line guys, we've had this incident and this incident and this incident'. He'd

cover a lot of ground and then he'd ask us individually 'do you have anything you want to ask or add or whatever'?

The one commonality between all lines was that transit officers were normally punctual and ready to commence duty on time. Even a few minutes' lateness by an officer was severely frowned on by the supervisor. One particular day I arrived a few minutes late for the shift and received a lecture in front of the troops about 'being on time'. The officers I was working with that night did not let me forget it either. My only comfort from the incident was that I was actually accepted and treated as 'one of the troops', in that I could be chastised as they were in equivalent circumstances.

Before the transit officers leave the office at the start of their shift, they all collect a radio and battery from the recharging pack in the office, test that it is working satisfactorily, and attach the speaking and hearing piece to the upper part of their uniform and the battery part to their belt. Further, the officers collect their canister of pepper spray for their shift. The use of pepper spray is strictly controlled and when not in use it is kept in a locked cupboard. Before the transit officer is given the spray, the supervisor or senior transit officer weighs the can and records the serial number and weight of the can. The officer signs that he/she has accepted the spray and at the end of the shift the process happens in reverse. Any discrepancy in the weight of the can between the beginning and end of the shift must be accounted for. If the pepper spray is deployed during the shift the appropriate 'use of force' forms must be completed, along with the incident forms and all other relevant paper work.

The officers rostered for duty at one of the intermediate stations commence duty at those stations. They do not attend any muster or receive any hand-over. They usually obtain their pepper spray from the shift Delta crew, who will call into that station as one of their first tasks after leaving base. The strict control of the weighing and signing for the spray always takes place. In some instances I noted the supervisor delivering the spray to officers commencing duty at an intermediate station, checking on the officers and passing on any pertinent information (personal notes).

### **6.2.1 Station duties**

Following muster both the train riders for that night, and the transit officers rostered for station duties, commence their shift in the afternoons by manning fare gates; providing a uniformed presence on their allocated stations and meeting and greeting each train. All the end stations are manned and some of the busier stations along the line are also staffed by transit officers. Usually transit officers work in pairs at all stations, however it does sometimes occur that a pair may be separated prior to 7.0 pm in order to provide a presence at more stations. Although statistically more incidents occur later in the evening, problems can occur during the day which leaves officers feeling concerned regarding their safety when working on their own. As Sam stated

One thing tonight that I recognised was I'm here working at ... train station and until 7 o'clock [when] ... is coming up from ... station, so single manning, and to be honest with you I was, wouldn't say scared, but I could see that [this] can possibly create situations which would be difficult. Working alone in this line of work I think. I do believe that if that's not rectified in time to come that [there] it could be an incident where people might regret [that] single manning is allowed until 7 o'clock. I think these days, especially with this particular line and maybe South line, anything can occur at any time. And I guess there has been incidents to prove that. I think something needs to be done or rectified.

The afternoon and early evening aspect of the transit officer role is predominantly minimising fare evasion and providing assistance to any passenger that may require it. Any problems that occur during this time are usually related to school children. At stations where there is a bus interchange area, the transit officers also keep a close eye on interchange places. During the day school children often gather and socialise in these areas, bullying can occur and trouble can erupt between various school gangs. Additionally, undesirable people can frequent these areas to prey on vulnerable children. At one particular interchange station, transit officers ensure they are a visible presence to discourage drug dealing which they believe has been an issue previously (personal notes). Further, there are problems sometimes with itinerant and homeless people loitering in stations, required by the transit officer to move on away from the station and bus interchange area. At nights these areas can be a problem with trouble often erupting as arguments develop or domestic disputes occur between intoxicated people waiting for their buses; people gathering

to drink and socialise; and homeless people trying to find a bench to lie on and shelter from the weather (personal notes). These issues can escalate quickly, as Eddy describes

The woman started an argument with her partner whilst we were there, because I think she had a clue if anything was going to happen, we would have stopped it anyway. And yeah, she just came out speaking her mind and he snapped. And I didn't see it coming, but he just came over and just starts walloping on her.

On this occasion, transit officers were required to make an arrest.

There are times when passengers try to take things on the train that are not allowed, such as furniture, a varying assortment of animals and on one occasion I saw a man with a shopping trolley full of large framed pictures. Transit officers on these occasions have to refuse travel to the 'would be' passengers with their possessions. This one particular night, transit officers had already put the person with the shopping trolley off one train, however he must have caught the next one which required him changing trains at the station I was working on. When the transit officers I was with saw him, they immediately told him to leave the station. He then proceeded to try and sell the paintings outside the station whereupon the transit officers had to move him on again as he was still on railway property. We all wondered where those paintings had come from, but it was beyond the transit officers' powers to resolve the matter.

Transit officers also monitor the station car parks at night and see that passengers getting off the trains get to their cars safely (Public Transport Authority of Western Australia, 2007c). During the day a number of the major car parks are looked after by a car park attendant, however after 21.00 hours the car parks are unattended. Additionally, transit officers are responsible for inspecting their station, and reporting any vandalism that has occurred or any hazards they have identified (Public Transport Authority of Western Australia, 2007c). It can sometimes happen that a transit officer or a pair of officers are rostered to work at a station for the first time, and do not receive any briefing or formal induction to the station. As transit officers remarked, not being familiar with the station surrounds can be hazardous if an incident occurs before officers have time to familiarise themselves with the station layout and emergency procedures (personal notes).

As a part of the customer service role that transit officers provide, they are expected to have knowledge of the train times and bus routes in their area, and to develop a local knowledge of the station's vicinity, to be able to answer queries or provide directions for the travelling public. They help passengers who require assistance with using the ticket machines. These machines were often a source of frustration to the public when they were out of order, and passengers often vented their frustrations on the transit officers, as if it was their fault (personal notes).

I quickly learnt when I first went on track with the transit officers that there are certain duties that 'you must do' if you wanted to get accepted. One was to work at .... station on a Thursday night, and the second one was to work on the 'Zoo train'. I was always asked whether I had worked either of those two shifts, and it became obvious to me that it was rather like an initiation process. If you survived those shifts and still came to work you were accepted. Both these duties were on the same line, so I endeavoured to get myself rostered onto that line early in my field research. The 'Zoo train' I subsequently learnt was the name the officers gave to the last train on a Friday and Saturday nights to one of the outer lower socio-economic economic suburbs. I will further discuss that aspect of transit officer work under 'train riding duties'.

The relevance of Thursday night at .... station is that the station is also a bus interchange area in close proximity to a very large shopping centre. Many entertainment features such as cinemas, restaurants, pubs, pool hall and a nearby dog racing track are also located in the vicinity of the station. Thursday night is the late night trading evening for the shops in the area, subsequently patronage on the line is very busy. This station is also a meeting place for youths who travel the trains at night to escape family violence (T. Cooper, et al., 2007; Teague, Green, & Leith, 2008). As previously mentioned, the transit officer culture thrives on stories, and transit officers have a plethora of stories to tell of Thursday nights at .... station. Alcohol abuse and assaults used to be a frequent occurrence at the station, and the bus interchange area; with fights often breaking out between warring families or gangs, which transit officers would be forced to break up. At one stage, the situation had become so bad that mounted police would be in attendance all evening. To reduce the risk of incidents developing, people are not allowed to gather at the station. If passengers appear to let trains go through the station without getting onto

them, transit officers move people on from the area to try and stop a *melée* developing. To reduce the risk of injury to transit officers, as many transit officers as possible are present at the station. One of the nights I was there, even though people were prevented from gathering at the station, there was an empty block across the road where a crowd started to gather. As transit officers have no powers to act away from the bus and train interchange, we were only able to monitor the situation and provide a uniformed presence to deter loiterers accessing railway property. I remember the feeling of unease that enveloped me as more and more cars started arriving at this vacant block. It appeared to me, as the numbers grew, that word had got around that .... station was the place to be; maybe as a result of youth access to quick communications such as texting. The line delta crew and line supervisor attended, plus a number of transit officer train riders detrained to provide us with additional support. However, after a lot of posturing by the group, they all suddenly took off without incident; leaving the area with a loud revving of engines, horns blasting and tyres squealing from 'burn outs' as they drove away. We all breathed a sigh of relief, and whilst a number of other incidents happened that night, they all seemed minor compared with what could have occurred.

When transit officers work at stations such as .... , which is an intermediate station, they are concerned that their cars may be damaged whilst they are on duty. As no public transport is available when they complete their shift, they are forced to use their own transport. However, at all end stations there are secure, locked car park compounds for their use, with quick and easy access to their office. This is not the case at intermediate stations. Although there are two car parking bays marked for RTO use at these stations, it is obvious to the general public that the vehicles parked there would belong to the transit officers, leaving the officers reluctant to use these bays at night for fear of damage to their vehicles. People they have previously arrested, or people they have dealt with in the course of their duties, may harbour a grudge against the officers and see damage to a personal vehicle as a way of getting back at the individual or the system. During the time I was on track with the officers, two vehicles belonging to transit officers on different lines were damaged. One of the vehicles, which was in one of the RTO car park bays, was damaged by a person stomping all over it, and the other vehicle, which the officer had parked as near to the office as possible, had the car windows smashed.



This situation also concerns transit officers accessing their vehicles at the end of a shift. Before leaving the station the officers have to remove their rig belt and accessories, and then change out of uniform and lock up the station. They make their way to their cars with none of the accessories they normally carry such as baton and pepper spray to assist them if they get attacked. Transit officers feel very vulnerable in these situations as incidents have occurred. The officers endeavour to deal with the situation by both leaving together, neither one going to their car on their own, and neither driving off until both are ready to leave. This situation has recently received a higher profile following the assault of transit officers leaving ... station at the end of their shift (Safety Committee Minutes, June 2009).

### **6.2.2 *Train riding duties***

Transit officers' train riding duties usually commence around 6.30 pm following their meal break. The officers are required to board the train, randomly choosing the door through which they board, walking through the train, checking tickets, monitoring passenger behaviour and dealing with any situation that may arise. If a situation develops at an unmanned station along their route, or a manned station that requires additional assistance, they may be required to disembark the train and assist in that area. For instance, prior to the time I had my own radio, I was riding with two of the train riders on the midnight train to one of our outer, lower socio-economic economic suburbs and we were waiting for the train to depart the main city station. I suddenly realised that the two transit officers had run off the train and were running down the platform toward the underground station walkway. At that time I was unaware what the problem was. I debated whether to remain on the train (I was on my own with a train full of mainly-drunk, people), or to disembark the train. (I would be on my own on the station), or what to do. I chose to disembark the train and the train departed. Although feeling vulnerable on my own on the station, I also realised that I would be visible on the CCTV screen in the monitoring room which I decided was the better option. This thought gave me some comfort and it was not long before the transit officers I was working with that night returned. Our train had been standing on the platform near the entrance to the walkway. A call had gone out over the radio for any transit officers that were in the vicinity of the walkway to the Underground Station, and the officers were in a situation to respond immediately. The radio message the transit officers received

indicated that a person was walking through from the main City Station to the Underground Station 'king hitting' anyone they came across in the process. The transit officers I was with immediately assessed the situation as being a higher priority than manning the train we were on, and acted accordingly. Luckily the person had been apprehended by the time they got there, so they returned to the main station. However, this situation emphasised how vulnerable I could quickly become on track.

If a train comes to an emergency halt for any reason during train riding duties, it is the transit officers' responsibility to check on the driver's welfare, look after the safety of the passengers and deal with any situation that may have arisen. For instance, there may have been a suicide on the track. The driver always remains in the driver's cab and the transit officers have the responsibility of checking on the driver; the condition of the person that was hit; summoning emergency services; rendering first aid if the condition of the person warrants it and dealing with the passengers' queries and passengers' safety. When a fatality occurs the train cannot be moved or the scene of the incident disturbed until after the Coroner has attended. In such circumstances the transit officers will liaise with train control as to when it is appropriate to detrain passengers to a safe place until a replacement bus can be organised. Many transit officers find situations such as suicides traumatic, and they can lead to psychological injury. Peter described what happened

When someone decides to take the coward's way out and sit in front of the train, we're the first ones there, we have to identify first of all if the person is deceased. Nine times out of ten, there's a guarantee, but you still need to make that initial, even though it's not a, it's a call that an ambulance officer has to make, but like I say, yeah, tell those ambos to hit the skids because this guy's still breathing sort of thing. We have to ensure that the driver's alright, ensure the passengers are alright and we have to stand over what's left of the remains

John also commented on the psychological effects of the job

It's not just probably the physical side of maybe getting punched in the face or whatever else, it's that ongoing, 'I've just seen a person who's been spread over 150 metres by a 100 ton train. How am I going to go home and tell my wife what sort of day I've had?'

There is an understanding between emergency services and news agencies that suicides on track are not reported in the news to prevent any 'copy cat' incidents

occurring. The transit officers endeavour to shield the passengers from viewing the scene on such occasions. Consequently, the general public would be unaware of the trauma that transit officers may be exposed to, as opposed to ambulance, fire and police officers where the public has a deeper understanding of the nature of their roles. Whilst transit officers have a debriefing session and are offered counselling following such an incident, the impact for some officers can be significant: for other officers, it might be the cumulative effects of attending a number of these events which can have a traumatic affect on themselves, and in turn an effect upon their families. Families may be at a loss to understand the emotional impact this sort of trauma may have on a person. Green (2004), in his research on post traumatic stress disorder in police officers, advocates family therapy in such circumstances, and believes that even just explaining symptoms of post traumatic disorder to the officer's partner can have a positive effect on family relationships. However, in the RTO, families are not involved in the rehabilitation process or provided with any information on the possible effects of such a disorder.

Friday and Saturday nights are busy nights for transit officers and are often characterised by a high number of incidents occurring. People are out at restaurants, night clubs, the casino, parties and pubs and often want the evening to last as long as possible. At the end of their night the merry makers congregate at the stations to catch the last trains back to the suburbs. On these nights extra trains run until 02.00 hrs. from the city to cater for this night time economy. Winlow, Hobbs, Lister and Hadfield (2003, p. 179), when conducting research within the night time economy, identified that "many people can and do choose to discard normative behaviour in a number of problematic ways, and they do not take kindly to being told that some forms of their hedonistic excess are inappropriate". As a result, these trains include people that are under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol and acting irresponsibly. As the Hon. Troy Buswell, Minister for Transport stated in Parliament:

The unfortunate reality is that there are a few cowardly, gutless individuals who think that the way to finish a good night out is to attempt to assault one of our public officers. These public officers go to work to help make the travelling experience safer for us .....  
(Western Australia Legislative Council, 2011a, p. 1)

Transit officers told numerous tales about fights that have broken out on these trains, each story seemingly outdoing the previous one. I learnt how transit officers

had been injured and, in particular, how passenger behaviour on one line brought about the title of 'Zoo Train' for the last service to the suburb. After a recent brutal attack on two transit officers by passengers on one of those trains, the Rail Tram and Bus Union spokesperson Glen Ferguson referred to one of the late trains to an outer metropolitan suburb as "the V Line Express, because there is increasing violence, vandalism and vomit" (MacDonald & Zaw, 2011 p. 9). Once the 02.00hrs. trains leave Perth's Central station, the station is locked up as no further trains run until services recommence at 05.00hrs. This enables some of the transit officers and all available Aboriginal Liaison Officers (there are four employed by RTO) to provide extra assistance on the final trains. The delta vehicles also follow these last trains as close to the line as possible, ready to provide assistance if required and remove any person that is arrested. However, in spite of all these precautions incidents still occur.

After listening to all the stories that transit officers told me, it was with trepidation that I boarded the 'Zoo train' for the first time. I can still remember my initial introduction to this train. The smell of stale alcohol and vomit was overwhelming. The first person had started vomiting before the train had even left the station. Unlike airlines, there were no sick bags available. However, I noted that the transit officers provide a formidable presence, with officers available in all railcars to deal with any offenders. As Angus described the last trains

It is just like they are zoo trains and they are hard to control because they are all young juvenile kids and they know that they can get away with murder and they don't care, you know. You try and say to them, "Sit down and be quiet please", but two seconds later they are just fidgety people and they can't sit still and they just want to swing from the hand rails. So the solution is, what do you do? Your general duty of care is to make sure that these guys get home because they are juveniles, but really you just want to throw them off at the next stop and sometimes that happens because you have no other choice. And you know, it is your last train and do you really want to arrest someone, especially an indigenous person, who then you have to give a juvenile caution and then get a responsible adult, which there is none, and then you are sitting there [at the lock-up] for hours for what?

As this quote indicates, the transit officer cadre is torn between keeping the peace by getting troublemakers off the train; delivering young people to their home stations; and arresting persistent trouble makers. This last option can raise further

problems, however, since the troublemaker may well be a juvenile and juveniles require special treatment which involves the hands-on presence of the transit officer until an adult caregiver can be located and arrives to assume responsibility for the troublemaking child.

Often the transit officers are left to deal with the results of the social dislocation that is occurring within our communities. Angus went on to describe a situation which had happened the previous night when he and his transit officer offsider could not get a parent to pick up the trouble making child. When this situation occurs, transit officers have to contact a welfare agency which arranges a taxi home for the young person.

There was two juveniles last night and we had to call Crisis Care and arrange a taxi to take one of the kids home, because mother was actually – whether she had a car or not, she claimed that she didn't have one and then she said, "Well I will try and ring the father," and the father actually lived in .... which is you know ten minutes from .... and refused to come down and collect his son.

So that is what Crisis Care is there for, to pick up that slack. So because we don't really convey people home to their homes. ....It is not a problem getting them [Crisis Care] to come to [our] aid, it is just the time factor and it is not an immediate thing. You're probably normally waiting an hour to an hour and a half for a taxi to come and then Crisis Care talks to the parents and then gets their permission and there is like a triangle of conversations that take place.

Sometimes, on the train, transit officers have to deal with juveniles who are paint or glue sniffers. Occasionally when people board the train they can smell the glue or paint, and at times see the telltale tinge of paint around the faces of young teenagers from sniffing the fumes. These young people are usually difficult to deal with as they are invariably 'high' from the fumes they have been sniffing. John recalled how he felt when a glue sniffer spat in his face". No one wants to be spat in the face and taste glue for two weeks because you're dealing with a sniffer and it's disgusting". Other passengers on the trains are also affected by this solvent sniffing. The Hon Ken Travers stated in Parliament that a gentleman had complained to him "that in the middle of the day he had to get out of one carriage and move to another carriage because a group of youths were sniffing glue or solvents on that train" (Western Australia Legislative Council, 2011b).

Another challenging aspect of train riding is having to deal with groups of people on the train who are playing up. As Nola explained

Depending on what numbers you're dealing with and what they're doing, you can go up and have a quick chat to them and say 'come on fellas, let's just take it easy a bit more', and then see how they react to that. And if they tell you where to go then you'll call [for assistance from transit officers]. On this line we've got a manned station every second or third, so then you'd call for someone a couple of stations up. So then you've got four and then you're dealing; and then you can stop the train and then deal with them if they want to play games. But they don't realise that at the time, they'll tell you to get stuffed and then you'll walk, take a few steps back and oh, 'weak as piss, weak as piss'. And then you'll get to the next station, it will stop and two more will get on and then four of you, it's like 'alright you're all getting off now'. It's like 'what did we do, oh we didn't' so yeah. ...But you've got to sort of pick your battles because if there was say six of them and you go in there with two and you know, which some people would do around here, they just don't think ahead what their options are to use to work smart and go home in one piece.

Situations also arise when you think a passenger may need assistance; however, they may refuse help for many reasons. For instance, on one of the late night trains to the suburbs, at one of the unmanned stations, a gentleman got on the train with his clothes torn and cuts and blood all over his face. He acted as if that was just normal and went and sat down. I heard one of the transit officers saying to him "You look as if you have had a bit of a hard night Sir", and when the train arrived at the end station the transit officer inquired whether the man required any assistance or an ambulance. The person refused to engage and just continued to look straight ahead as if there was nothing out of the ordinary. We later heard that there had been a big fight at that station and from the CCTV pictures our passenger appeared to be the instigator. I was talking about this incident to transit officers a couple of nights later. They replied "he must have been a newbie [new transit officer], we would have just ignored it unless he had asked us for assistance" (personal notes).

### **6.2.3 *Delta vehicle (mobile) patrol***

On each shift and on each line at least two transit officers are rostered for duties in a delta vehicle providing a mobile patrol, with the longer lines having two mobile patrols. These transit officers usually spend the first few hours of their shift

staffing one of the busier, usually unmanned, stations on their line, if no higher priority occurs. This typically entails covering the morning and early evening commuter, and afternoon school children, busy periods. The station they man is normally situated approximately midway along the track, enabling transit officers to respond to an incident anywhere on their line in the minimum of time. However, occasionally they may be called to assist on another line when circumstances such as a *melée* or suicide may have occurred. The remainder of the delta shift is spent travelling their line, providing a roving presence, calling in and checking on all stations along the way. The delta crew always follow the last train back to the end station ready to assist the train riding officers should any problem occur.

When undertaking rostered duties with a delta crew I found one of the tasks we were given was to deliver a summons to a member of the public. This task surprised me, as it had not been covered during our training and I wondered what instructions the transit officers had been given prior to undertaking the task. The summons was to be delivered to the person's home address, which was not on railway property so the particular powers transit officers have are rendered void. The summons was for an alleged offence that had been committed on railway property, so I was sure that the person receiving the summons would not be too happy to see them. As Wayne informed me

There's no real instructions, the only instructions initially when I did the first one was you do a cell call to base [radio to the central control monitoring room] and let them know you're going to a private address and then when you've left that address you do another cell call and let them know you've left the private address.

On my further questioning on what was an acceptable time lag between the first and second radio cell calls to base, Wayne stated

There's no instructions that I've been given apart from 'do a cell call before, after' and that's just been from a supervisor, it's not written anywhere or sent to me in an e-mail or wasn't in any training: actually it probably was just given to me by a more experienced officer when I went to do a summons.....

The safety implications are amazing because you deliver a summons and someone's not happy about it and they can kill you like, you don't know what can happen. But yeah there's no time limit on the cell calls as far as I'm aware that if we don't call back they'll get back to you, they just note it down and they just carry on with their job watching the cameras.

The lack of a job safety analysis for the task concerned me, as did the absence of a set procedure for the officers to follow. However, in my position as a participant observer I was not in a situation to comment. A couple of weeks after this event, the transit officers commenced a 'work to rule' campaign which was instigated by the transit officers' union in response to a breakdown in negotiations for a new enterprise bargaining agreement. The delivering of a summons was one of the tasks that the transit officers refused to do as part of this campaign.

As previously mentioned, one of the main issues that concerns the transit officers when they are on duty in the delta vehicle is the lack of emergency priority status for their vehicle. When they are summoned to go to the aid of fellow officers, who may be outnumbered and dealing with a difficult situation, they want to get there as quickly as possible. However, they have to comply with all the normal road rules. They are not allowed to put the siren on or have the flashing light on the vehicle roof illuminated. This begs the question as to why they have the capability for sirens and flashing lights, but they do. Over the radio they can hear that their mates are in trouble but they have to follow all the usual speed limits. Frank describes the situation as

You hear someone on the radio screaming for backup, you're the closest and if you were to obey the laws and rules and policies of the RTO they'd be dead by the time you get there. Every single code 9 or code 10 I've attended we have sped, and on occasions broken other traffic laws. But it's fairly advisable they'd rather do that and lose their license and pay fines than be attending their mate's funeral.

Or as Angus describes it

When you are hearing your mates on the radio and they are in fear of their lives, you just really want to react upon it and get there as quick as you can

Priority situations also occur when the railway boom gates may be down, due to a fault or accident holding up the traffic, leading to a large traffic jam. The boom gates always fail safe in the down position. Once at the scene, transit officers can manually lift the boom gates and direct traffic over the crossing. Transit officer Harold refers to the conflicting standards that exist within the organisation in relation to these emergency situations. Management wants them to get there as soon as possible to staff the boom gates and get the traffic moving.



They know we speed... They will instruct us to do the speed limit but they don't enforce it, or how can they enforce it. And in saying that, they'll tell you to get there as fast as you can. If that's the case then you get there as fast as you can ... you'll hear it from control when they're talking to us if there's boom gates down, 'get there, get there,' find out what the issues are.

A number of times when I was working with the delta crews we would have a radio call come through from the shift commander requesting us to investigate a report received by train control. These reports were normally from a train driver who had seen juveniles or persons unknown near the railway track in a particular location. Due to the dangers associated with the rail system, no person is allowed within the railway reserve unless they have the appropriate training, authorisation and also a 'look out' if they are within three metres of the track. Vandalism can be a problem on the track where juveniles may place objects on the line; coins between rails which affects the railway signalling system; throwing objects off bridges on to trains as they pass underneath the bridge; graffitiing railway property or, as sometimes occurs, accessing railway property to commit suicide. I was amazed at the assortment of things that people would put on the railway line such as shopping trolleys, bins and rocks with no thought for the potential injury that could occur if a train derailed. Accessing some of these locations involved 'off road' driving, however I noted that transit officers had not received any advanced or 'off road' driver training, nor had they been assessed as being competent in these skills.

Sometimes animals such as kangaroos or dogs would gain entry to the railway reserve and the delta crew would be asked to investigate and deal with the situation. During my time working with the transit officers, they raised this as a safety issue. Some officers had received dog bites in dealing with such situations; they did not carry the appropriate equipment nor had they received training in how to deal with animals on the track (Safety Committee Minutes, March 2008). This issue has since been resolved, and a notice has been issued to all transit officers not to deal with animals on track track. The Shire Ranger should be called, however the Ranger would need to be accompanied on the railway reserve.

The transit officers in the delta vehicles faced a major decision every night. Was it going to be fish and chips, Chinese, Italian, pizza or hamburgers for the evening meal? This was one of the advantages of being on the delta crew, having

the flexibility of being able to buy your evening meal from a choice of places up and down the rail line. Often we would be contacted by other officers on the line wanting to know what our decision for the night was, and asking if we could pick up some food for them at the same time. The orders were phoned ahead and would always be ready when we went to collect them. The shopkeepers usually offered a small discount for the transit officers; they liked to see the uniformed presence in the shop. We would take the meals back to the stations to eat. However, it did sometimes occur that we would just be sitting down to eat a meal when a radio call would come through which the transit officers would have to attend to immediately.

When problems occur, either on the train or at one of the stations, the delta crew swing into action. It may be to transport a person who has been arrested to the police lockup, or it may be to provide backup for other officers who are outnumbered. At times the transit officers may receive intelligence, warning that something was going to occur at a particular location, or as the transit officer explained it to me one evening “we’ve been given the heads up that ‘a smash’ is going to happen”. This particular information referred to a clash between two warring families that was going to occur that night at the main city station. The clash did take place on the overhead bridge at the station, however the preceding intelligence enabled the city-based transit officers to have sufficient back up to deal with the situation. In these circumstances, the delta crew can provide additional support and transport possible offenders to the police lock up.

### **6.3 Role Ambiguity**

Transit officers are not highly visible to members of the public in the sense that their uniforms are not distinctive from the revenue protection officers whose roles are limited to staffing fare gates and checking passenger tickets on trains. At the moment a contractor, xyz Security supply the staff who work in revenue protection but whose uniforms are provided by the RTO and look almost identical to those of transit officers. As previously described, the unique difference between the uniform is the colour of the wording and the actual words used on the uniform badge on their sleeves. However, the revenue protection officers often lack the physical skills, sense of presence and communication skills; and do not have the training and responsibilities of transit officers. Given that transit officers have a range of responsibilities which require officers to take action in specific circumstances,

problems can arise when members of the public fail to differentiate between the different roles and responsibilities of transit officers and revenue protection officers. This issue was raised in Parliament by the Shadow Minister for Transport – the Hon Ken Travers who said:

If members get on a train, I challenge them to look at the officers. They will be able to tell who they are only by looking very closely at the badges that they wear. The badge does not say 'transit officer', it says 'revenue protection officer'. The difference between these officers is that one officer has powers and a significant amount of training; the other officer does not. ... (Western Australia Legislative Council, 2011b, pp. p8751c-8753a)

This situation also has a reverse effect when a revenue protection officer does not assist in a difficult situation, leaving members of the public wondering why a transit officer failed to provide assistance or deal appropriately with a public order event. These circumstances leave transit officers feeling maligned and some consider their professionalism is being compromised by the revenue protection look-alikes. The transit officers are of the opinion that the general public view themselves and the revenue protection officers in the same way, since the uniforms are very similar. As Angus states, in terms which echo views expressed by other transit officers, and which position the revenue protection officers at arms' length by referring to them as xyz officers rather than revenue protection officers:

I've spoken to quite a few members of public and received complaints from them about transit officers and talking more about the incident have found out that it was Xyz officers that are dealing with it. So it's creating a bad image for us. It's not Xyz, it's not revenue, it's transits that are copping all the flak for it. [...] It is dangerous for us and it's a lot of bad publicity for us. It's hard enough, the job that we do and the lack of respect that we do get from people, we don't need other people adding to it and making it harder.

Or, as Sam expressed it, in the 'down to earth' terms common to a number of transit officers:

It is embarrassing for them to have a very similar uniform and deal with the public and then [we] deal with the public ourselves. 'Cause I find that some of them can't even speak proper English. And their ability to infringe is, yeah they'll just infringe anyone without considering further to that. You know, there's many reasons why people may not have a ticket. I think just the background of many of the people, it's like nothing against them but they're from another

country, just about all of them, and it's like a second rate kind of fix to the problem for lack of transit officers. But I do feel embarrassed to be wearing a uniform very similar to theirs. Nothing against any of them, it's just the way I think it's been approached by either xyz Security or RTO. I think it's dangerous. And I do consider that a lot of complaints that are founded may come from Rev. Protection. It's nothing against them, they're doing the job.

As Wayne identifies, this ambiguity can result in situations escalating whereas without this confusion he believes the situation may not have got out of hand to the point where a person became violent:

It's a big safety issue for the public and also it's a safety issue for us because then you get the bad people who think 'these guys can't do anything', because the xyz officers can't, but then they come and deal with us and they think we can't do anything. So they aggravate the situation further, and become more violent thinking that we can't deal with it and when we go to deal with it we're dealing with someone who's this violent [arms opening wide]

It was rare to come across a transit officer who did not raise this ambiguity as an issue. Further, they usually linked their concern to safety. The majority of transit officer injuries occur during an arrest. If these minor infringements could be prevented from escalating to an arrestable offence, it would assist in reducing the risk of injury for transit officers. As a result of the public's confusion between the roles of the transit officer and the revenue protection officer, the public are generally unaware of the policing role that is reserved for transit officers alone. Instead, they might think that a person in uniform is powerless to arrest them.

A situation can start out as a person committing a very minor offence on the railway system: such as smoking, drinking or not having a ticket. This would normally end up with an infringement notice, but the situation can escalate with the person refusing to provide their correct details for the infringement notice. As a result of the 'person of interest' refusing to provide their name and address or, alternatively, providing a false name and address, the transit officers are forced to take action and arrest the person, whereas revenue protection officers do not respond in this way. Sometimes there is already a bench warrant out for a person's arrest, which is the reason why the passenger did not want to provide their details; however, on the other hand, many do not understand the policing powers that transit officers have on the railway system. Transit officers feel that if the public were educated on

the powers that transit officers have on railway property, and if their role were clearly differentiated from the role of revenue protection officers, this would reduce the number of arrests that occur, increasing safety for both the public and the transit officers. It might also prompt the public to appreciate and respect transit officers more. As John describes it

I think they [the public] just don't understand what it is [that transit officers do] so that ignorance leads to contempt. People who use the trains every day will see you and they know you're there to do a job but I don't know whether it is respect or just ignorance to who you are and what you can do and what the police side of your role is. They know that you can help them out with a ticket but when they see you starting to deal with people and they're a little bit unsure of whether you can or can't you're going to draw that negative energy from the public because they're like 'you can't do this, you're not police you can't get my name', it's really frustrating.

The similarity of the two uniforms was raised as a safety issue by one of the transit officer safety representatives at the Transit Officer Safety Committee Meeting I attended. The manager viewed the situation as a transit officer 'ego' issue, and did not believe there was a safety issue involved (personal notes). However, I noted that the minutes of the meeting did not reflect the transit officer 'ego' issue as a reason for the status quo remaining. Rather, it was documented as "the practice will continue with the different badging and not wearing cargo pants" (Safety Committee Minutes, March 2008, p. 3): effectively, no change and the matter dismissed. As no compromise could be reached (personal notes) between transit officers and management on the uniform issue, the transit officers decided to wear their high visibility vests all the time to create a point of difference. Whereas revenue protection officers' responsibilities do not include any duties that require them to leave the safety of the platforms and station precincts, the transit officers, like all railway workers who may have to access the track, are issued with high visibility vests which must be worn on track-duty occasions. The transit officer vests have transit officer written across the back and are visible from a distance. When worn over the normal transit officer uniform, the fluoro vest differentiates them from the revenue protection officers. Transit officers wear these vests as a means of dealing with the ambiguity arising from the uniforms. Wayne summed up the situation when explaining to me why they were wearing the fluoro vests at all times.

We started doing that purely to try and identify us over the xyz officers. That was a union issue where we all voted and said ‘yep right let’s do this until they change those uniforms’ to just give the public a little bit of indication that we’re not the same as this group, and we have different powers and a different role. So that’s just us taking our initiative; it’s not from management, they’re not looking after our safety even though we’re addressing it to them. So that’s a big issue when you address safety issues to management and they don’t deal with it appropriately, and then we end up dealing with it to the best of our ability and they can come up with simple ideas and then improve on those ideas, but it’s not being done.

## **6.4 Maintenance**

Transit officers have a high risk job compared to many other occupations. Daily they are exposed to a broad spectrum of risks ranging from violent, aggressive passengers (Dickinson & Bevan, 2005) to uneven surfaces when accessing the rail track (personal notes). All employers have a ‘duty of care’ to provide a safe workplace for their employees, minimising the risk of incidents and injuries occurring ("Occupational Safety and Health Act (WA)," 1984). This statutory requirement is however a minimum requirement. Researchers of safety in high risk organisations now advocate the need to move beyond mere compliance with the law, and use proactive methods, such as audits, for uncovering what is wrong with safety. The imperative with best-practice is to move beyond a tokenistic compliance which may seem to be little more than shielding the organisation from risk of censure to an active engagement with building a safe workplace (Hopkins, 2006b; Reason, 1997; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001). Hopkins (2007, p. 113) refers to this as developing organisational mindfulness, where leaders “exhibit chronic unease”, while Weick and Sutcliffe (2001, p. 42) refer to mindfulness as “the combination of ongoing scrutiny of existing expectations, continuous refinement and differentiation of expectations based on newer experiences”. Both these authors adopt the view that danger may exist beneath the appearance of normality, and leaders need to search for what might occur, rather than just checking for a sterile compliance with the safety system.

Dickinson and Bevan (2005) found in their research with British train operating companies that the managers behaved as if violence that occurred on the rail system was either brought to the railway, meaning they could not control it or do anything about it, or was the fault of the staff (Dickinson & Bevan, 2005). These

managers preferred to act as if violence was an unavoidable problem rather than seeing it as something which could be minimised or controlled as a result of company interventions. These attitudes were similarly reflected in RTO, with transit officer injuries being treated if they were as accepted as part of the 'nature of the job'. This philosophy is gradually changing, with the corporate executive assuming greater responsibility for putting officers in 'harm's way' and looking at ways to reduce the transit officer incidents and subsequent injury rate. However, managers tend to view the security section in isolation without considering the impact that other areas of the organisation may have on safety outcomes for the transit officers. John summed the situation up:

I think the RTO perspective is different to the ground level transit officer perspective because we're the ones that are facing the problems, continuously dealing with the public, so we know what we need as tools to do this, but the support isn't there in its entirety from the organisation to do that.

Hopkins (2006b, p. 881), in his analysis of the culture of rail organisations in New South Wales, based on the official inquiry of the Glenbrook rail crash, found:

First, the railways were obsessively rule focused, in ways that hindered safety. Second, the railway system was organisationally and occupationally fragmented, resulting in a culture of silos. Third, there was a powerful culture of punctuality – on time-running. Finally, the culture was risk-blind, even risk-denying.

My research found a similar railway culture existed within the RTO. Risk assessments were not taught in the transit officer training, instead a very strict adherence to the railway 'safe working rules' was promoted. These rules cover the operating procedures the railway. Failure to follow these rules leads to the person being disciplined. Performance indicators for the division were based on 'on time running', with passengers' satisfaction surveys undertaken on a regular basis. Further, the organisation is made up of a number of Divisions delineated by their business purpose and budget, operating independently under different managers, reporting directly to the Chief Executive Officer. Within these separate Divisions are further divisions dictated by specialised occupations such that revenue protection officers are totally different from transit officers and both are entirely distinct from customer service officers. This fragmentation has resulted in silos operating independently within the organisation with no understanding of the impact that

decisions about one area may have on the safety of other work groups, but particularly the transit officers. This situation has resulted in people managing other work groups not considering occupational health and safety issues that might help reduce the risk of injury for transit officers. Many examples of such lack of consideration occurred when I was on the tracks with the transit officers, such as the ones documented below.

The busy Port station is also a bus transfer station and situated close to many historic, well-patronised pubs, night clubs and an abundance of dining venues. Frequent problems occur, particularly at night, as a result of intoxicated, disruptive behaviour by people leaving the entertainment precinct. One night during my research there was a fracas in front of the station building. The transit officer radioed the CCTV operator to ask for a camera to be placed on him and his partner and the people they were dealing with. The operator informed the officers that the camera was broken, and no CCTV coverage was possible in that area. These cameras normally provide: a safety defence for the officers, enabling the shift commander to monitor the situation; back up support to the officers if the situation warrants it; video evidence for any subsequent court case and, if needed, support for any action taken by the transit officers. Additionally, this particular camera at the front of the station can normally be operated from the station office to pan the surrounding area for potential problems. I subsequently learnt that the fault had been reported two weeks previously and was still waiting for repair. A further two weeks later, while I was on duty in a delta vehicle, I again heard a request from a transit officer over the radio for the same camera to be placed on them, and again I heard that the camera was still broken (personal notes). The maintenance for these cameras is undertaken by another division of the organisation. The people prioritising the work for that particular section of the organisation may not realise the implications that the failed camera would have on the transit officers' safety. As one of the transit officers recounted to me, following a workshop that he and another transit officer had attended:

We were in a class with twenty other people from the RTO and they literally have no idea what transit officers did. We sat there telling them stories about walking down train tracks picking up body bits and dragging people off trains with knives and guns and they just sit there and go, 'You guys do what?' 'How often does that happen?' 'Fairly regularly'.



Transit officers were concerned that even where the camera coverage worked well it could be inadequate, such as occurs on some of the bus interchange areas. Decisions not to install cameras in these particular areas where events can quickly escalate into serious situations, emphasises the silo mentality of the organisation, leaving transit officers feeling vulnerable when working in those locations. Transit officers also interpret the situation as demonstrating that management does not care about their safety. David's words echoed the thoughts of other transit officers:

It's almost like it is 'okay we don't want to acknowledge that we have transit officers, cause to acknowledge them means that we have to acknowledge that we have problems on trains.

As indicated, the operation, positioning and maintenance of cameras was a common safety concern amongst transit officers and certainly a cause of frustration that their safety could be compromised by the lack of a camera, the lack of maintenance or, in the case of the new underground station, the fact that cameras were placed in positions that only allowed a partial view of the platforms. As Angus told me:

Some stations with their camera footage is absolutely ridiculous. They set up cameras willy nilly wherever they like. They need to improve, especially in the underground station, they have got one of their cameras that they can zoom in and out and swivel around and they have got an information board right in front of it, and it cuts out a lot of the vision of the platform, especially when we are dealing with offenders.

Again this was raised as a safety issue by the transit officers with management representatives, who stated that alterations could not be carried out until the contractors, who had built the station, had completely handed the station over to RTO. On another occasion, transit officers requested a CCTV monitor at one of the northern line stations which would enable them to view what was occurring on the upper concourse when they were on the lower level. Management refused the request due to the cost (Safety Committee Minutes, March 2010). It appears that this decision was taken without any risk assessment being undertaken, or an analysis of the kinds of financial and other burdens which can follow on from injuries to transit officers.

## 6.5 Equipment

Transit officers have the perception that management do not appropriately assess the risks when deciding on particular types and brands of accouchements that form part of their uniform and equipment issue. In particular, transit officers are concerned that the torch with which they are issued is bulky, heavy and provides poor illumination. The torch is necessary when transit officers access the track and tunnels, away from the bright lights of the platform. As many transit officers told me “the torches are useless in the tunnels” (personal notes). After the first couple of shifts working on track, transit officers soon learn from the more experienced officers that they can purchase a better torch, which is lighter, smaller and provides far better illumination than the issued one. In spite of the transit officers known preference for this torch, management still issue the bigger version adding more weight than is necessary to carry around on their rig belts. These leather rig belts are worn all day and any extra weight may increase strain on officers’ backs. Douse (2006) carried out a survey of United Kingdom (UK) police forces to determine the causes of back pain in the police forces in the UK. Whilst the survey did not demonstrate an unequivocal link between the carriage of equipment and back pain, it was determined that equipment weight may “be a contributing factor, if not a direct cause” (Douse, 2006, p. 1). Additionally, during an incident, the bigger torch carries a further risk of an offender grabbing the torch and using it as a weapon. As well as purchasing the smaller torch, the longer-serving officers quickly advise newcomers to buy a pair of gloves appropriate for carrying out ‘pat down’ searches on an apprehended person. These searches are carried out to determine whether the ‘person of interest’ is concealing a weapon, including syringe and needle. Although management does provide gloves in the delta vehicles and on stations, they are thin and not puncture proof, providing little protection for the transit officers. In spite of transit officers asking the ‘person of interest’ whether they have any concealed instruments and receiving no response or a negative response, the transit officers can still be exposed to the risk of injury as a result of the person’s non disclosure. Although all precautions are taken ‘patting down’ the person, injuries can still occur, particularly a needle stick injury. Transit officers dread the thought of this form of injury which carries the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS, hepatitis B or hepatitis C. These incidents result in the transit officer being ‘in limbo’ for the next three months

as they wait for the all clear from their blood tests, which in turn impacts on their relationships with their partner and family. Jack describes such an instance occurring with one of his work mates:

One of the boys [...], he got stabbed; he patted a guy down ‘have you got anything on you?’ ‘Nup’. He patted the guy down and next thing he’s got a needle in his wrist. So he’s going through months of testing. Apparently his sex life dropped off because he was going through all testing, his missus said ‘no don’t want to know about you’.

A similar outcome can also result from being bitten by an offender. As Hayden recalled following such an event, “It worried me in respect to my relationship with my partner and not knowing what you have caught and what you haven’t”.

To reduce this particular risk of injury, the transit officers ensure they have the gloves in their possession at all times in case the need arises to carry out such a search. The officers attach the gloves to their rig belt by a clip.

A further equipment issue that transit officers often raised was that they could not clearly hear their radio at all times, particularly when there was a lot of background noise. If they turned the volume up too high, passengers would be able to listen to what was being said. However, I found that the transit officers, having identified a problem themselves, were very resourceful in trying to solve it. In this instance I found many individuals bought their own ear piece for their radios, enabling them to have improved radio communication. Transit officers, through their safety representatives, are now lobbying management to issue the radio ear pieces as part of the transit officers’ basic equipment.

## **6.6 Supervisors**

A common thread that emerged during my research on each rail line in RTO, was the lack of training for transit officer supervisors, both before and after their appointment. There is a career promotion path from transit officer to senior officer; progressing from one stripe, through two stripes, to supervisor then shift commander. While this path is available for transit officer advancement; there are no supervisory skills taught to the officers to equip them for the positions as they rise through the ranks. Supervisors can find themselves one of ‘the boys’ one week, and

a supervisor the next, and this makes it difficult for them to carry out their new role without any additional training. As Jo stated:

He was just a transit officer, so we used to muck around and get up to virtually all sorts of mischief. Now he has to elevate himself above that and I know he's finding it hard to be able to separate

This was not the case in any of the other transit police agencies visited during the research. In all other cases, transit police officer supervisors received comprehensive training specific to their role.

As one of the Supervisors said: "I've mentioned it at meetings as well, but no-one seems to really sort of care too much about it. [...] They give you an acting stint and you're straight in there". Another supervisor felt that the transit officer management were trying to get further training for them, and would support the suggestion, but that a move to more training would be blocked by management higher up. "Unfortunately it would go to [...], who would push it up further and say, 'look we would like to get our people onto this', and it would be, 'nup they don't need it'.

Candidates are selected for senior Supervisor roles from an internal pool of transit officer applicants. When a position is advertised, transit officers apply for it by submitting an application following the public service guidelines. This requires the applicant to demonstrate on paper how they meet the desired criteria for the position. These applications are assessed and a short list of applicants is chosen to proceed to the interview stage. There was a lot of disquiet amongst the transit officers during the time I was on track with them, that one particular officer had been promoted whom they considered to be the worst officer on the track for acting safely, had very poor communication skills with the public, and that person had now become responsible for the safety of the staff under his control (personal notes). The perpetuation of this paper-based method of promotion without the support of additional skills ensures the continuation of existing work practices, including poorer work practices. As Engel (2003, p. ii) found in his research with police officers, "a field supervisor's style may have a profound impact on patrol officer behaviour". As one of the supervisors told me:

There was no further training, it's something we're really trying to push for [...] It's not that you can go to an interview and tell a story,

it's that you've been able to demonstrate certain skills along the way so you've been able to achieve a certification; you've done this course or whether it's your 'train the trainer' or some other course that the RTO puts in place. So there's nothing there at the moment, so what you rely on when you go for your interview for promotion is past experience and you can draw from anything but you should try and keep it obviously relevant but there's nothing that stops a transit officer who has just come out on his first week on the job from applying to be a supervisor.

Fred voiced similar concerns and went on to say:

It's got to be merit and you've got to have some time or demonstrate prior knowledge like let's say you've been a sergeant in the police for 20 years and you came here then it would be quite reasonable for the organisation to look at you to become a supervisor or leader. But I still think that they would need to do the pre-requisite or demonstrate pre-requisite knowledge or training. If they want supervisors to be able to do the job properly and get the right supervisors they need to put in training levels or steps.

Reuss-Ianni (1983) refers to two cultures of policing, management cops and street cops. More recently Chan (1996), supporting a previous view espoused by Manning (1993) (cited in Chan, 1996), identified a third culture of policing, Command, middle management and lower participants. However, I found that the supervisors did not appear to fit in to any of those categories. Transit officers did not view supervisors in the same way as they thought of the management above the level of supervisor, and supervisors did not see themselves as part of any management team. These supervisors created a fourth level, or lower level of management who I will call sub management and were in a category on their own. Upper management or Corporate, and Middle management were removed from the day to day activities that occurred on the track, whereas supervisors were there on the ground with the officers, yet they were no longer 'one of the boys'. The supervisors were in control of their line without additional skills to assist them educate, organise, motivate or discipline staff as necessary. They were expected to deal with all the issues that might occur including following up any incidents that arose. Many authors argue that the leadership style of supervisors in the police force is based on a paramilitary model (Auten, 1985; Morreale & Ortmeier, 2004). The RTO was no exception, with a strict emphasis on following railway rules with no discretion for decision-making in those areas. Further, a number of the supervisors had a previous military or police background. Hence, with no further training for their supervisory positions,

supervisors did not have any other leadership model to follow. As one of the longer-standing supervisors declared to me when discussing the newer-appointed supervisors: “All of a sudden they’re going ‘I don’t know what the hell I’m doing, no one showed me anything’.” He went on further to explain:

You’re generally working on your own anyway, so across the board you work on your own from day one so you don’t know where you’re making mistakes, you’ve got no one to give you all that guidance unless you seek it out.

Besides the lack of guidance on their supervisory role, and in addition to the silos created on each line by the X plan, many supervisors were left feeling isolated and lacking collegial support at work. As one of the supervisors declared to me:

For me here I’m the only supervisor, so I said to the guys one night after there was a big thing, I said ‘you’ve got [...] other friends on this shift but I don’t have anyone who’s my friend on the shift [...] here, because I’m the one making the decision that nobody is happy with, but you can go and bleat to all your peers here. Whereas I’ve got to deal with all [...] of you and make the unpopular decision and my only next friend is in the City and there’s only a telephone and I can ring them and say “hey I need to deal with a situation” but you guys have got the collaboration here already, so you need to appreciate that’.

Wayne believed the lack of supervisory training led some of the supervisors to resort to bullying in the workplace:

There are so many issues that are coming about because of them not being trained and not knowing their job when they admittedly say ‘look we haven’t been trained; we’re not sure sorry [...] give me a break. I’ve only been in the role for two months or something, I’ve just been doing the same as you before this’. So there’s a lot of issues there where safety is put in jeopardy because they don’t know what to do in their role to look after your safety. Bullying occurs because they don’t know their position to the point where they think ‘well I’m the supervisor, you do what I say.’

Wayne believed the supervisors were unaware what constituted bullying in the workplace, and that some of the supervisors had not developed a coping style to “manage people and manage staff” in their role. At the time of the research, there was no formal organisational policy on ‘bullying in the workplace’, nor had training been provided for supervisors on this topic.

Although lacking in training themselves, a number of the supervisors endeavour to provide education and training to the transit officers on their line, using the musters at the start of the shift to address the challenges ahead; and gathering the transit officers at the end of the shift to debrief and learn from the events of the night. Supervisors on each line had different ways of trying to develop a cohesive staff culture. One particular supervisor developed what he called an 'E-Muster'. This was sending the notes of the briefing he gave at a muster at the beginning of a shift to all transit officers at intermediate stations and roving patrols on the line. On several lines specific supervisors would always make a point of visiting the locations their transit officers were based at, passing on any relevant information and answering any problems that the officers may have. On one particular line the transit officers looked forward to the Sunday barbecues which were held by their supervisor on a regular basis. On another line, the less-busy Sunday shift provided the supervisor with the opportunity to spend more time educating transit officers, usually on some aspect of the law that was pertinent to them. The transit officers were also encouraged to put forward a topic to be discussed at the next educational briefing. When an incident occurred, some line supervisors would use the CCTV footage to review the incident with the transit officers involved, discussing whether the situation could have been handled more effectively, or to praise them when they handled the situation competently. However, many transit officers did not have access to this form of learning, as a number of supervisors did not take the opportunity to assist transit officers improve their handling of a situation.

The supervisors were not given any performance indicators that they had to meet, so consequently there was nothing that management measured which would differentiate the proactive versus the not so proactive supervisors. Supervisors are not made accountable for what occurs on their line, neither are they given the discretion to run the line as they think fit. This results in situations being dealt with on an individual basis, without a clear proactive strategic direction to reduce the rate of crime and anti-social behaviour on any particular line. Occasionally there would be a police blitz on a line addressing an issue such as 'graffiti', where plain clothes police would be used. Sometimes a couple of volunteers may be called for from the transit officers. However, during the research, although supervisors were responsible for their line, such decisions were taken at a central management level.

## **6.7 Communication**

Communication, either direct or indirect, is a significant component of any organisational function (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2001). As Alvesson and Berg (1992, p. 160) argue, communication flow is the way an organisation characterises itself to the wider community and forms an important basis for the development and maintenance of identity within the organisation. Examining communication in the context of the RTO and the role of transit officers, the flow of information, or lack of information, is an important contributor to how transit officers view their value within the organisation. Furthermore, as in any law enforcement role, communication is pivotal in transit officers' dealings with the public, and both their verbal and non verbal communication is critical in any exchanges (McKenzie, 2007). To discuss these issues I will separate communication into two categories: communication between management and transit officers; and transit officers' communication with the public.

### **6.7.1 Management communication**

Two-way information flow from management through supervisors to employees and vice versa is important for the morale of the employees, their motivation and operational safety (Angiullo, 2009; Westrum, 2004). A lack of this communication exchange has previously been identified as a contributing factor in many major accidents (Westrum, 2004), including rail disasters such as the Glenbrook Rail Disaster in New South Wales (Hopkins, 2005) and Ladbroke Grove Rail Disaster in Britain (Health and Safety Executive, 2005b). Information flow keeps people informed of what is occurring within the organisation and usually includes issues such as safety statistics, analysis of incidents, accidents, near misses and safety audit results (Reason, 1997; Standards Australia, 2006a). Communication enables management to pass on safety targets to employees and to establish the importance that management places on safety in the workplace. This, in turn, determines the safety climate that workers work within. Existing research has established the importance of leadership in the development of a safety culture (Health and Safety Executive, 2005b; Westrum, 2004). As Leith (2008) found in his research in a refinery, even a message sent by top management lamenting the frequency of accidents and incidents effectively conveyed to workers that management considered safety important. However, in the transit officer security



section of RTO, no such message was sent, no safety targets were set and promulgated, no benchmarking with other organisations was undertaken, nor was any incident/accident root cause analysis provided. Transit officers were unaware how their line performed compared with other lines or organisations. This lack of analysis regarding accident/incident root causes, and whether there were common denominators between events, prevented a targeted approach to reducing the accident/incident rate. Any analysis of an event that did occur usually took place as a result of legal proceedings against a passenger; following a passenger complaint against a transit officer; or for disciplinary action against a transit officer. E-mails from management to transit officers would generally be reminders of rules, particular work procedures or related issues relevant to transit officer duties. As previously discussed, information between the lines was not shared and this accentuated the communication shortfall. Hence transit officers relied on the 'grape vine' for information. This was often not accurate and usually became embellished as a specific story got passed on.

In the past, communication meetings had been held between the transit officer security management and representatives of the transit officers. However, these meetings had been disbanded a few years before the research at the request of the union (interview notes). Any communication meeting was now held between management and the Australian Rail Tram and Bus Union Sub Branch Secretary and two Union Delegates. However, not all transit officers are members of the union and this caused consternation amongst non-members, who felt their voices were not being heard.

As regards specific safety committee meetings, these take place infrequently. Safety representatives are elected for each line, but with the high turnover and movement of staff, a line may be without a representative for some time until a new election is held. The meetings are generally poorly attended by representatives, who may not be rostered for duty at that time or cannot be released from duty to attend. Management may attend these meetings, but often the elected representatives feel their concerns are not being addressed with a few of them becoming disillusioned and not continuing in their safety committee position. As one of the safety representatives told me:

It comes back to communication. I find that no matter what you try and do in this place, every time you try and do it there is a road block, and there is a brick wall, there is something stopping you from doing it, and the biggest thing is talking over you. I mean, [...] has just this inept ability to block you out and just talk straight over the top of you, and you know, you could sit there and talk till you're blue in the face, and he will talk over the top of you and not listen to a word you're saying.

Prior to a meeting, a list of all transit officer injuries since the last meeting are provided to members of the committee. However, the nature of the injury is provided in broad categories such as “sprains and strains of joints”, “psychological issues” or “open wound” (Transperth Train Operations Security Services, 2009a, p. 1; 2009b). Again, the summary of the incident is also provided in broad categories such “stumbled to the ground during an arrest” or “injured escorting offender to delta” (Transperth Train Operations Security Services, 2009b, p. 1). Contributing factors to the event are not identified, explored or discussed to develop an action plan to prevent a recurrence, nor is there information on which line the injured officer was working on. Discussing incidents between lines at this cross line safety forum would contribute towards a safer workplace and break down some of the barriers between the lines. Many transit officers interviewed during the research had no idea who their safety representative was, or who the Occupational Safety and Health Coordinator for the Division was, and had never seen any minutes of a safety meeting. However, I did note the minutes of one safety meeting on display in an office on one of the lines during my fieldwork.

Angiullo (2009) asserts that frequent open communication fosters a ‘sense of belonging’ for the front line staff. In line with this finding, the lack of information provided to the transit officers leaves them feeling ‘outcasts’ of the organisation (personal notes). While transit officers believed that most of the supervisors told them what they knew, they also thought there was an information block between management and the supervisors. Additionally, a ‘silo mentality’ prevented the flow of information between rail lines. Simon explained to me:

There is a brick wall between the management and the officers, and not so much the supervisors, because I know that supervisors and the senior officers get continuous e-mails from the managers [normally relating to train running events], and that's not in regards to what's going on with the unit and all the rest of it. And yet the guys don't get anything unless it seems to be a negative thing. Other than that,

it just seems like you know, there's this brick wall. ... I think if there was more open communication between the managers and the guys, I think the place would be a bit more harmonious in how the troops see their higher ups.

Or as James declared:

Sometimes there are issues that we don't have input into or they just happen without us knowing. One thing I find even with the shift commanders, individuals seem to put directives out without talking to other senior members, other supervisors. Somebody will just put a directive across the e-mail system saying, 'you will now do this'. Then he signs his name at the bottom but it was never discussed with other supervisors or other shift commanders. That just seems to happen.

Such a situation occurred one night when I was working at a suburban underground station. Our supervisor on the particular line that night, who was not based at our station, relayed instructions he had received in an E-mail from a different section of the organisation. In future, transit officers were to lock the metal gates at the northern end of our station using a chain and padlock, at 6pm Monday to Saturday; 9.30pm on Thursday and all day on Sunday (Supervisor, 2008). The particular gate concerned was the only exit and entry for people using the lift and stairs from the underground platform. That particular exit provided quick entry to the shopping centre and at night was used as access to the night life of the area. The only other way to exit or enter the station was at the southern end of the station by way of escalators. No one knew why the directive had been issued; we were simply instructed to comply with the notice. This caused numerous problems. People with bikes, which were not allowed on the escalators, passengers in wheelchairs and passengers with prams had no other means of exit from, or entry to, the station. Furthermore, even though a notice had been put at the base of the stairs and outside the lift, passengers took no notice. The travelling public would get to the concourse of the station and find their exit was barred by the locked gates, resulting in them having to go back. When the younger night-time passengers started arriving, they would endeavour to climb over the tall metal gates, regardless of no footholds and the high risk of injury to themselves, rather than take the time to go back and exit through the other end of the station. Furthermore, when transit officers were busy with other issues, people unable to use the escalators had difficulty contacting them. The only way this could be done was by using the emergency speaker on the

platform to talk to the operator in the CCTV monitoring room. The operator could then radio a transit officer to unlock the gate and let the person out. However, there is no means of communication for passengers to use at the approach to the station. Consequently, people entering the station from the locked end who needed to use the lift to access the platform had no way of contacting the transit officers. Passenger tempers flared. Transit officers were subjected to abuse from passengers due to the difficulties, inconvenience and extra time it took as a result of the gate closure. A number of passengers missed their trains having to access the platforms from the other end of the station. It quickly became obvious that no consultation with staff or risk assessment had been conducted prior to the directive being issued. Days later, transit officers did eventually get the directive removed on safety grounds. I later learnt the new rule had been put in place at the request of the shopping centre management.

#### **6.7.2 *Transit officer communication***

Communication is defined as “the exchange of information between a sender and a receiver, and the inference (perception) of meaning between the individuals involved” (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2001, p. 479). Many communication experts theorise that the communication process is made up of three elements; body language which makes up fifty to sixty percent of the exchange; the voice, which is responsible for thirty three to forty per cent of the message, and the content element of the message which is only responsible for seven to ten per cent of the total impact (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2001; Means, 2007b; Thompson & Jenkins, 2004). Body language, often termed non verbal communication, includes facial gestures, voice intonation (which includes tone, pace, pitch and modulation), and proxemics (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2001; McShane & Travaglione, 2003; Thompson & Jenkins, 2004). Proxemics, which includes the physical distance from the person being communicated with, also refers to the way a person stands and carries themselves which contributes significantly to the passengers’ perceptions of the power of transit officers (Hall, 1963; Kreitner & Kinicki, 2001; Thompson & Jenkins, 2004). Transit police organisations which were visited overseas refer to this professional presence, or stance, as an important deterrent in terms of dissuading illegal or sense of anti-social behaviour, and it is the first step in a ‘use of force framework’ adapted by a number of police organisations

which I will discuss later (New York Police Department Specialized Training Section, 2009; Transit Police Boston, 2009).

An important aspect of the transit officer role, as with any law enforcement setting, is the ability of the officer to communicate in such a way that they leave the passenger in no doubt as to what they mean (McKenzie, 2007). David, one of the supervisors, described the communication role:

It's about speaking to people and I guess they need to be able to speak to people of all walks of life, not just speak to the people that are the bad guys or not just speak to passengers that need help. They need to be able to address anybody from any walk of life, whether they be, ... doctors, teachers, whether they are the Aboriginal man down on the street ... the middle Eastern couple that are .....

Transit officer Max explained rather more bluntly how transit officers' verbal communication varied depending upon which line they were working on:

Like the northern line has got your middle class white trash who think they know everything and they're a lot different to deal with than say your indigenous people that we deal with here. There's a whole different customer service thing. I mean on our train you just tell them to shut up and they shut up. But on the .... train it's just not going to work that way.

On questioning Max further on how he would handle the northern line passengers he replied:

I've found the best way to deal with them is just becoming very methodical. You state [to] them the offence they're doing, the consequence of what's going to happen if they keep going the way they are, then proceed to an arrest if you need to. Whereas on the Southern or Eastern line 'just stop that, shut up and sit down'. They know where the line is.

Particularly critical to the safe practice of transit officer duties is the transit officers' skill in defusing a confrontational situation. However, during the twelve week's training only half a day was devoted to conflict resolution competence, resulting in many transit officers not feeling skilled and confident in dealing with potentially aggressive situations. In other organisations which were visited during the research, far greater time was devoted to learning this skill, which was commonly termed 'verbal judo' or 'tactical communication'. The Massachusetts Bay Transit Police in Boston (2009) define in their course in these terms:

Verbal judo is the principle of judo itself: using the energy of others to master situations. It contains a set of communication principles and tactics that enable the user to generate cooperation and gain voluntary compliance in others under stressful conditions, such as hostile suspects, upset or frightened victims, or any action which places the officer and the community at odds with each other.

Like other agencies visited, the Massachusetts Bay Transit Police in Boston followed the lecture room theory with numerous occasions of practising the skill of ‘talking down’ to achieve calmness during scenario training exercises. This enabled their officers to become proficient in dealing with confrontational situations in a realistic, simulated yet safe environment. However, in RTO, as well as only spending half a day on learning conflict resolution strategies, each transit officer only undertook one scenario training session. As previously discussed, trainers took the part of passengers in each trainee’s single session, which did not give the situation the realism achieved by other transit policing organisations. The only RTO training scenario undertaken was constructed to end in an arrest. There was no option to try and defuse the situation as the simulated circumstances formed the prelude to a court scenario, with transit officers having to prepare all relevant paper work and give evidence in a mock court. The police Academy court room was used for the court exercise. However, if the transit officers had learnt ‘defusing’ skills, the scenario may have ended differently. Any subsequent ‘talking skills’ practice was not scenario-based or realistic, and took place in the class room with a partner from your group. As one transit officer explained the situation to me:

So your partner is there giving you a mouthful and it is someone that you know for a start, and it’s like, ‘yeah good on you dickhead’ and you treat it like that, and it’s treated as a bit of a joke. Whereas if they had something like the set up like they’ve got at the academy [police] and have professional actors come in and someone you don’t know, suddenly you’re put in a scenario of someone you don’t know going off in your face, giving you a bit of a shove. It really puts a different perspective on how people deal with things and it really makes you stop and think.

As no simulated situation was provided where transit officers could practice their verbal defusing skills, this resulted in many officers finding it difficult to deal appropriately with situations involving verbal confrontation. Consequently, some officers ‘arced up’ a situation, rather than ‘talking it down’ to reach a compromise resolution. While working alongside the transit officers on track, I observed that

people tended to respond to aggression with more aggression and the situation could quickly get out of hand (personal notes). A particular issue could start off with something as small as 'smoking on the platform' or 'not having a ticket' and quickly escalate to a confrontational situation, particularly if the transit officer used an aggressive manner in dealing with the person. These situations have the potential to result in a person being arrested rather than the situation being defused with a possible 'win win' outcome for all concerned. As previous research has shown, there is a positive correlation between the amount of aggression an officer uses and the risk of resistance that the officer faces (Fridell, et al., 2009; C. Wilson, 1996; C. Wilson, et al., 1994). On the other hand, officers who use assertion, rather than aggression, are more likely to achieve compliance. As Ian reported to me:

Once you've worked with someone you can kind of see the way they talk to people and sometimes you just want to walk away from the train or platform. Because sometimes it's just downright embarrassing and dangerous, because you're just going 'why do you have a need to make this person so angry', you know? Just talk to them. Yeah, they might be a piece of shit, but kill them with kindness. Because I mean, I don't understand people that want to be doing [court] briefs and action reports.

A couple of times I witnessed a similar state of affairs. I found the circumstances very uncomfortable and embarrassing to observe, and wanted to comment on the manner that the transit officer used in communicating with the passenger. However, as a participant observer I was unable to take any action (personal notes). A number of instances were recounted to me by transit officers where a fellow officer with poor communication skills 'arced up' a situation which ended up with the transit officers' partner being injured; not the person with the poor communication skills who had precipitated the breakdown in communications.

When working with the transit officers I found that there are a few officers who have undertaken 'verbal judo' training in previous occupations. These officers were able to apply the communication skills they had learnt with good effect. As Mike told me:

Verbal judo comes in very handy for me and that's from what I learnt from the police not from what I learnt here, because it teaches you not to just get straight hands on, like wrestling someone to the ground. Try and talk them out of a situation.

Twice when working with the transit officers I saw different officers studying the book “Verbal Judo: The Gentle art of Persuasion” (Thompson & Jenkins, 2004) during quiet periods late at night. One of the officers had purchased the book and the other officer had borrowed a copy from the local library. Both officers felt their skills in this area were deficient and were trying to improve them. As McKenzie (2007, p. 79) states, “Knowledge equals confidence. Competent, confident officers make solid decisions and fewer mistakes”. In contrast, one transit officer explained to me how he could also learn from transit officers who handled a situation badly:

You learn as much from the bad ones as you do from the good ones. Just watching them deal with a situation that just made it much worse and going, ‘okay that’s something to look out for, don’t do that. That’s obviously not working’. You [can] learn [from the bad circumstances] just as much from seeing someone do it perfectly.

## **6.8 Use of Force**

As previously discussed, one of the significant communicative elements of effective policing is the officer’s presence or stance (Bayley & Bittner, 1984; Bratton & Knobler, 1998; McKenzie, 2007). This refers to the professional demeanour and appearance the officer uses, their uniform, attitude and the body language they portray (New York Police Department Specialized Training Section, 2009; Thompson & Jenkins, 2004; Transit Police Boston, 2009). This professional presence can act as a deterrent to a troublemaker and provides the first step in the officer’s defence armoury. The second step to take command of a situation is commonly referred to as verbal persuasion. The officer’s choice of words should be professional, tactical, controlled and aimed at achieving the goal of generating voluntary compliance with the transit officers’ request (New York Police Department Specialized Training Section, 2009; Transit Police Boston, 2009). The authoritative presence officers portray must be matched by their verbal vocalisation, so that their appearance and vocal communication are congruent. Bayley and Bittner (1984, p. 50) refer to the need for “external calm and internal officer alertness” where an officer’s presence can calm a situation before any physical intervention is required. Nevertheless, no two encounters with passengers are the same, and a situation can alter very quickly. Unarmed physical force is the next line of defence where the officer uses open empty hand combat to control and disable subjects and to defend themselves. Transit officers are armed with a baton and pepper spray, but



are only authorised to use either of these to protect themselves or other people, and are permitted to use only such force as is reasonably necessary (Public Transport Authority of Western Australia, 2008). Therefore, the training that transit officers undertake is always in terms of how the force to be used must be commensurate to the resistance displayed by the person. Many of the officers did not like the baton. As transit officer Tom remarked to me:

I find the baton is the most useless tool that we have got; absolutely useless. I would prefer, if it came down to a crunch, I would prefer to use my fists, because once you have pulled that out and it doesn't work, what are you going to do with it? You can't just drop it because then they are going to pick it up and .....

Traditionally, most law enforcement agencies had a policy which guided their officers' use of force through a continuum (Smith & Alpert, 2000). This continuum normally described an escalating series of steps that an officer may take to resolve a situation. These ranged from the officers' presence through empty hand techniques to the use of a chemical spray such as OC (oleoresin capsicum or pepper spray); to the use of a baton to defend themselves and achieve an arrest (Aveni, 2000; National Institute of Justice, 2009; Public Transport Authority of Western Australia, 2007a). In some jurisdictions, officers are also empowered to use deadly force – a firearm, to protect life. Additionally, in many police forces, officers are issued with a conducted energy weapon (CEW) commonly known as a taser. These devices produce an electrical current which when fired at a person can momentarily stun them, giving police time to gain control of the situation. Transit officers frequently told me that they felt they should have tasers which would make their job much safer. Transit officer Rory explained the need for tasers to me:

Because there are a lot more violent offenders. Since I have started this job the amount of assaults on Public Officers, particularly us, has increased... Sometimes if you don't use your baton properly, you can get seriously hurt. That's why I'm afraid; that's why I feel scared now when I work out in the rail system.

Transit officer Jane explained that there was a need for tasers to reduce the time spent on aftercare of a offender when they have been sprayed and incapacitated with oleoresin capsicum (pepper) spray, which is sprayed directly in the offender's eyes. This causes the offender's eyes to tear and swell shut and their nasal passages to drain mucous profusely (Morabito & Doerner, 1997). Once a transit officer has

sprayed a person, they have a duty of care to look after that person until they have recovered from the spraying. This usually takes around forty five minutes, but can take up to a couple of hours. However, Jane felt that the real reason transit officers did not have tasers was probably due to cost:

We do the same job as police even though we are not police. We still use the same legislation as them. ... A can of pepper spray you're looking at ... roughly about thirty bucks a can and then you've got your training and you've got your after care which is forty five minutes after that. Speaking with other police officers, with a taser you know, the person will be disabled for about five seconds, you arrest them, there's no after care, there's no litigation against you, the person can't have after illness. ... But then it probably means it does come down to cost because tasers cost over \$1000 or whatever it is, where the old pepper spray is cheaper.

I found during my research with other transit police organisations that tasers were a contentious issue throughout the sector. Some transit police agencies were using tasers. This was the case with the New York Transit Police Department, which found them a very effective instrument. Others were not: for example, Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority Transit Police Department (personal notes). Some police agencies, for example Vancouver Transit Police and the Western Australian Police Force, have been at the centre of a great deal of negative publicity due to either the death or a heart attack of a suspect following the use of a CEW. Whilst these adverse events may have occurred anyway, the public perception blames the use of the taser. Nevertheless, the literature has highlighted that there are fewer injuries both to the offender and officer when a taser is used and the research appears to contradict the belief that the use of tasers carries a significant risk of injury or death (Butler & Hall, 2008; Force Science Institute, 2008). In some police forces the use of tasers is restricted to only specialized units or higher ranking officers, while with other police forces the tasers are issued to all front line officers (Commission for Public Complaints Against the RCMP, 2008).

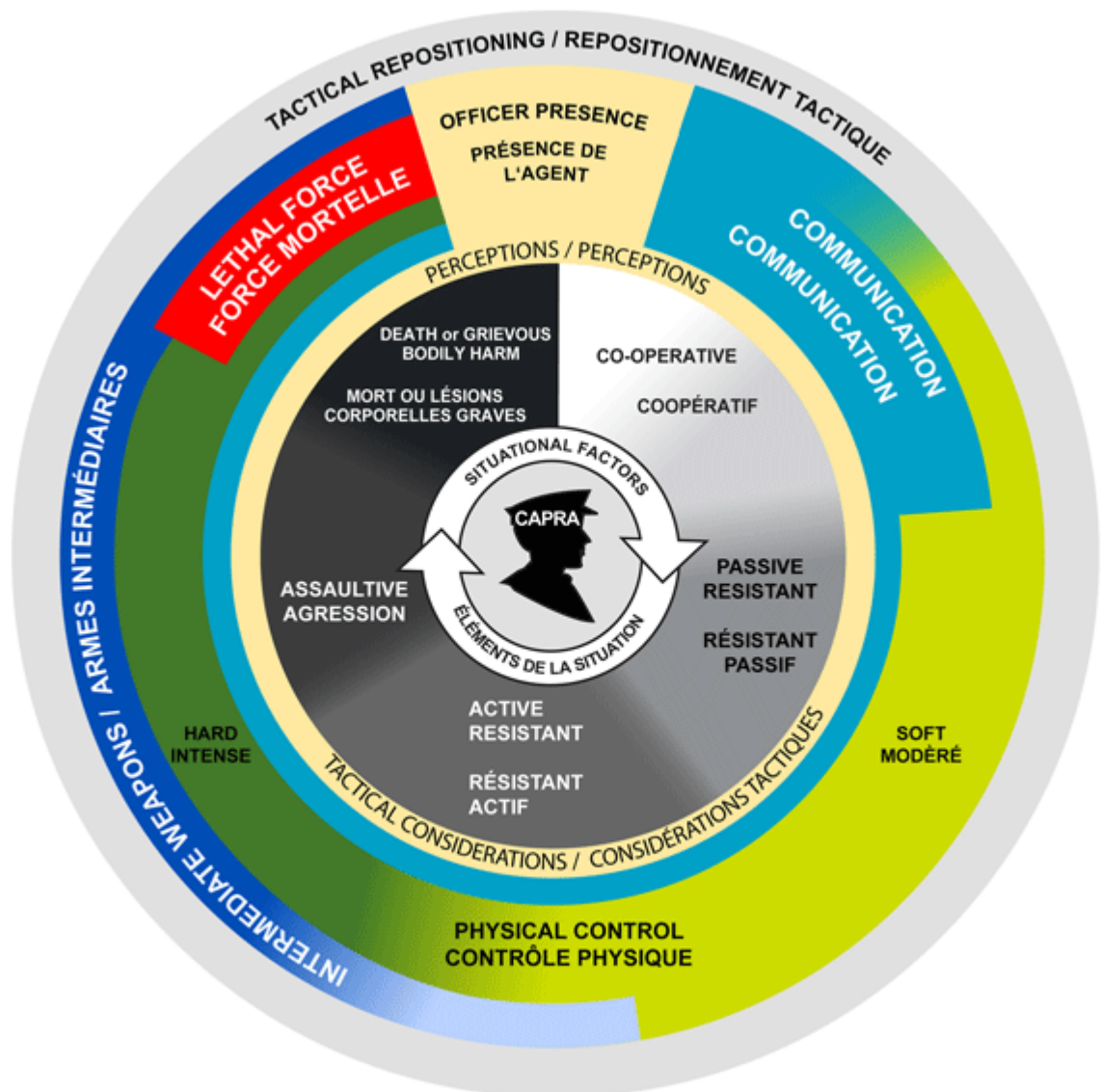
Previously, use of force frameworks have been depicted as a strict linear progression which gave officers the impression that they must progress through one level before going to the next level. In contrast, research now highlights that the appropriate use of force is often not a linear progression, and such a perception fails to capture the dynamic situation of a potentially violent encounter (Hoffman, Lawrence, & Brown, 2004; Zanin, 2009). As a result, use of force trainers were

brought together in 1999 from across Canada and the United States to develop a 'Use-of-Force framework' where officers "continuously assess the situation and select the most reasonable option relative to those circumstances as perceived at that point in time" (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2009, p. 1). The outcome of this meeting resulted in the Ontario 'Use of Force' model which has been adopted as the National Use of Force Framework in Canada (see below Figure 1). Butler (2009, p. 2) describes this decision-making tool as a "graphical representation that describes appropriate and reasonable officer responses based upon subject behaviours in conjunction with the totality of circumstances in which the officer finds himself". Although this model is dynamic and not a linear progression, it is still at times referred to as a continuum. Variations of this model were in place in all agencies I visited during the research. Using this basic model, officers are taught to consider all options, continually assessing the risk and appropriate response, considering all use of force options available, including the option to withdraw from the situation (Australasian Centre for Policing Research, 2004). Conversely, RTO transit officers are not familiar with a 'Use of Force Framework' and remain concerned at the limited options available to them to deal with violent circumstances. Compounding this situation, transit officers are now more reluctant to use oleoresin capsicum (OC) spray. At one stage the spray was withdrawn for a number of weeks due to a flammability issue, and the officers believe that the new batch is not as effective. As David comments:

The initial stuff was outstanding; the new stuff is sometimes hit and miss. Because it's got a little more water based in it now, the stream sometimes doesn't come out as a stream. It will go left, right and centre. It takes a lot longer to have an effect on the bad guys that have been sprayed. Whilst the original stuff, with an initial spray, they'd be down within 10 or 15 seconds. This new stuff may take up to thirty to forty seconds for someone to start having the effects.

In the past, researchers such as Morabito and Doerner (1997) viewed OC spray as a valuable non lethal tool to subdue violent suspects without inflicting serious injuries on those involved in the scuffle. However, more recent research indicates that whilst OC is generally effective, it is less effective on offenders who are overweight, violent suspects or people who are under the influence of drugs (Adang, Kaminski, Howell, & Mensink, 2006; Kaminski, Edwards, & Johnson, 1999). As Adang and Mensink (2004, p. 217) postulate, following a study on the use of OC

spray in the Netherlands, “an all too easy reliance on pepper spray (at the expense of other options) is potentially dangerous to officers given the fact that OC is not always effective”. Exacerbating this possible reduction in effectiveness of the spray, transit officers are not authorised to use the spray to affect an arrest, rather they are only authorised to use this option when they need to defend themselves. This leaves transit officers exposed to possible injury before they can employ defensive measures. As one officer told me in reference to dealing with offenders, “in the time it takes to work they could be on top of you punching you in the head”. Butler and Hall (2008) advance the view that no use of force incidents are considered safe due to the dynamic nature of such events which can evolve quickly and be extremely violent. Hence, the circular incident management intervention framework takes into account the possibility of the rapid change in the nature of an encounter which the previous linear models did not do (Zanin, 2009).



**Figure 1: National Use of Force Framework, Royal Canadian Mounted Police (Zanin, 2009), Ontario Use of Force Model**

Hoffman et al., (2004, pp. 2 - 3) describe the framework:

The innermost circle of the framework labelled ‘Situation’ contains the ‘assess-plan-act’ component that should be visualized as a dynamic as an officer’s assessment of a situation is never ending. The process of continuous assessment also helps to explain how a behaviour (and response option) can change from cooperative to assaultive (or from communication to lethal force) in a split-second without passing through any other behaviour or force options.

The area adjacent to the situation contains the various subject behaviour categories including cooperative, resistant, assaultive and grievous bodily harm or death.

Perception and tactical considerations are interrelated and are therefore contained in the same area, or ring in the model. Factors that the officer brings to the situation that may be unique to the individual officer interact with both situational and behavioural factors to determine how an officer may perceive or assess the situation. Further, the officer's perception of a situation may affect his or her assessment and, in turn, affect his or her tactical considerations.

The outer area of the graphic represents the officer's force options. These options range from officer presence to communication skills, physical control techniques, intermediate weapons and lethal force. Though officer presence and communication skills are not physical use of force options, they have been included to illustrate the full range of factors that have an impact on the behaviour of the subject.

Aveni (2000) raised concerns that with the introduction of the framework, organisations would use the model in lieu of developing their own 'use of force policy', believing a graphical representation is easier for officers to understand than the written word. Whilst initially the graphic representation was referred to as a model, The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police endorsed the model with the condition that the word 'model' be replaced with the word 'framework', which would form the basis of an organisation's own 'use of force' policy (Hoffman, et al., 2004). This framework, as well as providing a guide for police officers to use, has the added benefit of providing a consistent approach that police training schools, policy makers, the legal establishment and public can interpret and understand (Butler, 2009; Hoffman, et al., 2004). However, the officer's perception of the danger they may be exposed to in a particular situation may vary from officer to officer, based on the officer's personal characteristics and experience, which can impact on the level of coercion that the officer uses in an encounter to control the behaviour of the offender (Aveni, 2000; Butler, 2009). As transit officer Fred, who had previously been injured on duty by an offender, explained to me:

It's made me not take a lot of crap that I did take. I will jump in more quickly, but certainly not violently or aggressively, or even physically, but I'll try and stop it before it happens; because I've seen how it can escalate from just something sort of not simple but you know, telling someone to .... stop yelling and screaming and stop swearing and then it went to an obstruction and then it went to an assault. .... It does make you ... look at it differently at certain offenders, and it makes you more aware that anybody is capable of hurting you. If they've been drinking or whatever, anyone is capable

of violence. .... It makes you look a little bit differently. .... So you are just a bit more defensive.

Even though transit officers may not have been injured themselves, they will know other officers who have been injured. This can influence their dealings with offenders, such as in the incident related to me by transit officer Ian:

When [Heather] got punched at ...., the one that was over the news quite a bit and she ended up leaving because her injuries were ...., she wasn't able to come back. So I think when more severe things have happened to other people, that I've kind of gone, you know, it can happen, and it will happen.

Additionally, research has identified that an officer will use more force when dealing with a person that is under the influence of alcohol, displaying signs of emotional or mental impairment, or acting in relation to a number of bystanders that are present during the encounter (Terrill, 2005). However, the transit officers in RTO were concerned that they had not been trained to recognise somebody with mental illness, neither by their actions nor the way they speak. This could result in a mentally ill person being treated the same as any other offender when they should be treated differently.

How officers deal with any offender is closely scrutinised by the public. As transit officer Sam recounted:

If you have an aggressive person, you want to have a force option that makes you a level above them in order to control them and to remove them from the property or to restrain them. ... [The] General public will stand and watch and maybe even record it and try and tell us that we can't do that, even get in the way of it. So my opinion is that sixty per cent of the population would suggest that transit officers are thugs and forty per cent might appreciate the service that's there. To be honest with you I don't understand why. For those people that think we are thugs, I'd love to take them for a night so they can see what our duties can be because there are times when it is difficult. I guess in a sense you do put yourself out there, at any time you could be assaulted, which is common. Certainly you have to have your wits about you or be thinking in many situations because you just don't want that [assault] to happen, which is quite possible and likely.

Over the years, research has identified a perceived desire of officers to use force to protect themselves and their sense of identity, and to maintain the respect they believe they deserve. When they consider that this respect is challenged, they

may use more force than is necessary to control the situation (Crank, 2004; Terrill, 2005; Van Maanen, 1978a), and this propensity is even greater when third parties are present (Felson & Tedeschi, 1993). I also observed this dynamic on a number of occasions when on track with the transit officers who spoke of what they called the 'attitude test' with offenders. This referred to the officers' perception of how much respect the 'person of interest' had shown them (personal notes), which usually dictated how the encounter proceeded. As Terrill (2005, p. 110) states "Officers are socialized to 'maintain the edge' and be 'one up' on citizens not only to establish control, but to ensure proper respect". When officers felt the offender spoke to them with respect, they were often more lenient with them than they might have otherwise been. Fred provided some examples of these sorts of situations:

You have someone who's younger and they've done something wrong, they've say, given you false details and false names, you could obviously arrest for that, and you do a name check on them . ... They've turned around; they've given you their correct details straight away, they've said 'I was scared; I didn't want Mum to find out ... we're supposed to be at the movies', that sort of thing....

I think a lot of times there's a bit of leniency there, because you look at it, if you charge somebody who's eighteen who's never done anything before, they're at uni., maybe they're doing a degree, that's going to follow them for the rest of their life, or at least 10 years. So in that respect, you need to learn to, ... have not so much discretion but just you know, just work out what's going to happen to them at the end of the day. ... Are you going to give somebody a criminal record for a little mistake? You know, I mean, if it's something very serious then of course, but with something as small as that they turn around and they go 'look, I'm really sorry, I didn't want mum to know.'

I found transit officers were concerned that on many occasions they found themselves outnumbered by offenders, and had to deal with the situation with only their baton and pepper spray to defend themselves. Although officers are able to call for backup support, this may take a while to arrive. A potential multiple offender scenario had not been covered in the transit officer training, resulting in officers unsure of the best way to deal with such an incident. One of the officers recounted a particular event that had taken place where they were outnumbered:

I didn't panic per se at the time but after it was all over I was actually shaking. Not because I was feeling scared, I do believe that's just the adrenaline rush that I've dealt with a situation and it took me a



while to come down. But yeah, that was very scary, and what we did, we didn't get trained for. And in the end four offenders, two of us, fortunately two of the offenders were against two others, and two offenders didn't intervene. ... It could so easily have gone the other way and I don't know where we would have gone because we had no escape plans or no escape options from where we were on the station. So it could have got very ugly very quickly.

Transit officers in RailCorp Sydney Australia, like transit officers in the RTO, do not have the use of lethal force or the added protection of tasers at their disposal. However, Railcorp has developed their own 'use of force' model as part of their Standard Operating Procedures (RailCorp, 2008) which incorporates explicitly the option of disengaging. RailCorp's Tactical Options Model emphasises the need to continually assess and reassess the risk as conditions change, to disengage if "officers are out-numbered, or the situation is exposed, or officers are unable to preserve their own, customer or employee safety, or require specialist reinforcement" (RailCorp, 2008, p. 6). This information is presented both graphically and written into their Standard Operating Procedures, and verbally taught to the officers as part of their training. No one option is emphasised or recommended over another. Officers are taught to do a mental risk assessment of the situation, taking in to account the number of offenders, the environment that they are in and whether anybody is in imminent danger, and "must select the best option or combination of options using the minimum amount of force to address the situation" (RailCorp, 2008, p. 5). Central to this decision-making process is the continuous risk assessment the officers undertake, including the option to withdraw until there are a sufficient number of transit officers or police back-up to deal with the circumstances safely and effectively (RailCorp, 2008). In contrast, transit officers in RTO do not have such a model to follow, the risk assessment process is not emphasised, and hence disengagement until reinforcements arrive is low on the officer's option list. Transit officer Frank, who has a number of years experience, emphasised to me their need for training in this area; particularly, concerning how to handle an incident with a number of offenders, and learning how to assess the situation rather than rushing in without calculating the risk. Frank went on to explain:

There was very little scenario training for us. We just got given these one or two exercises with two on two – two transit officers and two bad guys, that's the worst it ever got. The reality out there can be a lot, lot different. ... The more scenarios you do the more you can

cope with the situation the better idea you're going to have when you are out there approaching various situations and how quickly a situation can change. Also a lot more training in how to handle the outnumbered situations [is required] because all the training we've done, we've never ever been outnumbered. It's always been a case of if you need help and it will not too far away, which isn't true. It can be over half an hour away. The fact of the matter is that very few transit officers, as long as they are professional, can contain and control a fairly large number of people. But we don't actually know that, so as a result you get the initial two transit officers responding to a problem and there's no training given on how to assess the situation. Like if it's going to be dangerous don't approach, wait for back up. You're just told, go and deal with this problem and then all of a sudden you're like up to your neck, and you're in way too deep and it's hard to get out. As a result, if it goes wrong there can be a lot of injuries.

The RTO 'Transit Officer Use of Force (Theory) Manual' does state "Be prepared to disengage at any time. No one is perfect; don't be tempted to be a hero. You may lose" (Public Transport Authority of Western Australia, 2007d). In spite of this, I noted the culture of the officers did not appear to reflect that written statement in the manual. As Crank (2004) identified in his research on police culture, officers who were not prepared to face danger were thought of as a liability, and shunned by other officers. Transit officers were similar. They would respond to a situation without considering the danger, and did not want to be partnered with a person who may 'freeze' in a violent or confrontational situation. During the time I was on track with the officers, I was unaware of any incident occurring when an officer withdrew from a situation until back up arrived, though I was aware of many incidents where transit officers were injured (personal notes). Transit officers were always concerned that their partner 'had their back', which was a term they used frequently, meaning that their partner was there with them 'backing them up' (personal notes) and covering their back. Any weakness shown by an individual officer was viewed with disrespect by other officers and led to a reluctance to work with that officer. Whereas any excessive force used is not viewed negatively by their peers (personal notes); rather, as Crank (2004) found in his research, it can be attributed and perhaps excused within the culture as an overreaction by the officer in the face of real or perceived danger (Crank, 2004).

## 6.9 Statistics

The RTO wishes to keep incident statistics involving passengers and transit officers confidential. As a result, statistics used here have been sourced from publically available information only. These sources include: information obtained from proceedings of the West Australian Legislative Council; statistics obtained under the *Freedom of Information Act 1992* ("Freedom of Information Act (WA)," 1992) by *The West Australian* and published in that paper; and the broad statements relating to personal injury statistics obtained from Annual Reports available from the RTO's publically accessible web site. For instance:

In the latest year, the ... [RTO] exceeded the 10 per cent reduction in the LTI (lost time injury) incidence rate (excluding security services) with a 15.9 per cent drop. It was encouraging that, even including security services staff, there was a 4.3 per cent reduction.

(Public Transport Authority of Western Australia, 2011, p. 76)

No further breakdown or analysis of injury statistics was provided in this latest report. However, these figures and statement mirrored the previous years' annual report (Public Transport Authority of Western Australia, 2010).

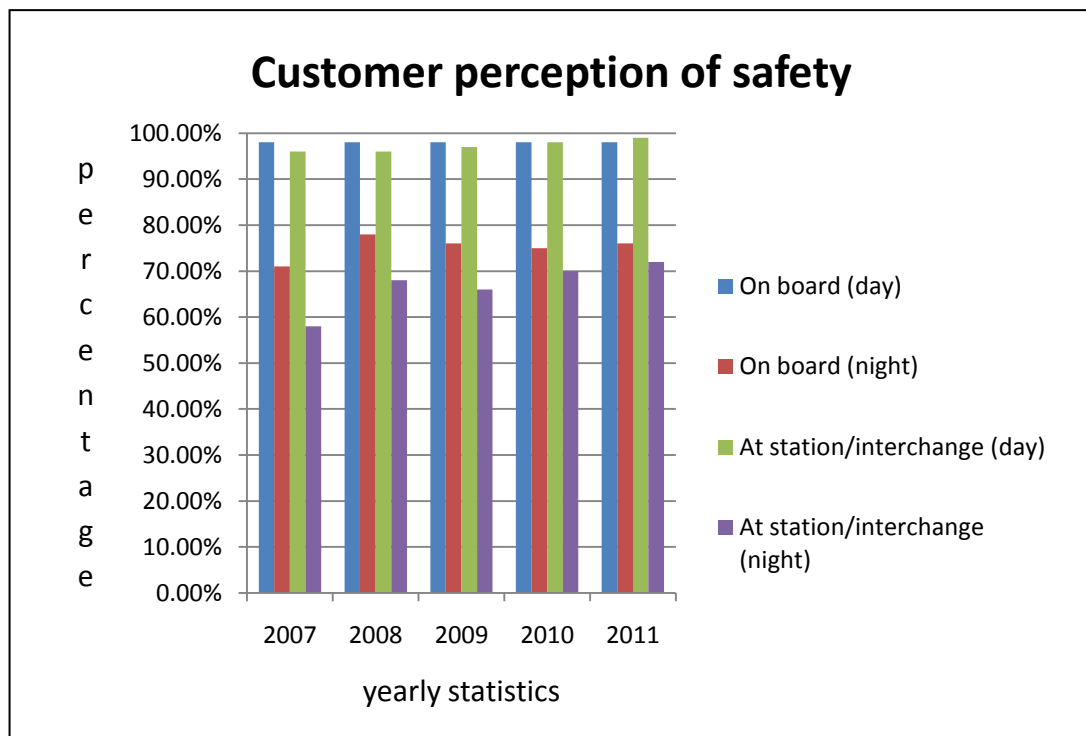
With the exclusion of security services the [RTO] exceeded the 10 per cent improvement target for Lost Time Injury (LTI) Incidence Rate, with a 15.9 per cent reduction equivalent figure for the previous financial year. With the inclusion of security services staff, this becomes a 4.3 per cent reduction.

(Public Transport Authority of Western Australia, 2010, p. 57)

The definition used by WorkCover for the LTI incidence rate is: the number of lost time claims for every one hundred workers employed (part time, full-time, casual and seasonal) (WorkCover WA, 2011, p. 34). A lost time injury is classed as any injury to an employee where the employee has lost one whole shift or more. Disease refers to any illness which is caused by, or results from, the work environment. The annual report published in 2010 did include actual figures for the LTI incident rate. This stated: Including the security services the LTI was 7.77; without the security services the LTI was 3.39 (Public Transport Authority of Western Australia, 2010, p. 57). No further breakdown of personal injury statistics was provided, and comparative figures were not provided in the subsequent annual report in 2011. Comparing these 2010 annual report figures with available rates

from other industries, which range from 0.2 in the Finance and Insurance business to the highest rate which is 3.8 in Manufacturing business (Department of Commerce Western Australia, 2009), the number for the whole RTO organisation is well above high risk industry rates. The lack of additional injury statistics prevents any further comparisons with similar or comparisons with high risk industries, or on other well known and accepted industry benchmarks.

As far back as the 2003/2004 annual report (Public Transport Authority of Western Australia, 2004), the RTO has been attributing the organisation's high injury rates to the nature of the transit officers' role; referring to the anti-social behaviour that transit officers have to deal with, and the psychological trauma as a result of dealing with suicides, and suspected and attempted suicides, on the railway network. Other RTO performance indicators in the annual reports include passenger boardings per service kilometre; on time running; accessibility; reliability; safety; and cost efficiency, which is calculated on the cost per passenger mile; and notifiable occurrences (Public Transport Authority of Western Australia, 2009). Notifiable occurrences are specific occurrences as defined in the *Rail Safety Regulations 1999*, and are a legislative requirement under the *Rail Safety Act 1998*. They relate to incidents that take place on the railway infrastructure, which caused, or had the potential to cause, serious injury, death or significant damage ("Rail Safety Act (WA) ", 1998; "Rail Safety Regulations (WA)," 1999). These figures are expressed as the number of occurrences per million passenger boardings and per million train kilometres (Public Transport Authority of Western Australia, 2009). Targets are set for issues such as 'on time running' of trains, but no target has been established for the reduction of transit officer injuries, and none was discussed at the transit officer safety committee meetings I attended. Additionally, transit officers were unaware of any injury statistic targets for the organisation (personal notes). However, passenger satisfaction statistics are collected and analyzed. Data is directly obtained from passengers using a passenger satisfaction monitor (PSM). This is a survey tool used by a consultant on behalf of the RTO. Included in these surveys is a measure of passengers' perceptions of safety on the rail system for both day and night, with the results provided in annual reports. See figure 2 below.



**Figure 2: Customer perception of safety** , (Public Transport Authority of Western Australia, 2011, p. 29)

As indicated by the graph, although there has been some improvement in the statistics over the last five years, passengers still perceive the rail system as being less safe at night. This drop in perceived safety occurs even though the majority of the transit officer workforce is rostered during this period. The survey also identifies that passengers feel safer on trains rather than at stations (Public Transport Authority of Western Australia, 2011), which may be a result of the transit officers' presence on most trains during the evening and night time, but not at all stations.

Spencer (2009, July 11 p. 17), who wrote an article in *The West Australian* "Train travel gets more dangerous" obtained statistics for the article from the RTO, using the provisions available under the *Freedom of Information Act 1992* ("Freedom of Information Act (WA)," 1992). This legislation gives people the right to apply for access to documents held by state Public Sector agencies. Spencer (2009, July 11 ) identified a nineteen percent increase in violent offences occurring on the rail system between January 1, 2009 and May 21, 2009 when compared with the same period the previous year. Additionally, in the three years since 2006, Spencer (2009, July 11 p. 17) found there had been 1850 violent incidents occurring on the railway system, between 1<sup>st</sup> January 2006 and 21<sup>st</sup> May 2009. These included

569 assaults on members of the public and 539 offences against transit officers with 748 cases of violent or intimidating behaviour (Spencer, 2009, July 11 ). Referring to this particular article, the Hon Alison Xamon raised questions in Parliament relating to the definition of a violent incident, and the number of violent incidents that had occurred on the rail system between January 1, 2009 and October 2009. Responding to the Hon Alison Xamon, the Minister for Transport, the Hon Simon O'Brien stated that the RTO defines a violent incident as "an act by a person who assaults or attempts to assault or threaten others, including Public Officers". A violent incident is also considered to be: "action taken by a person to resist arrest by punching, kicking and thrashing which requires restraint" (West Australian Legislative Council, 2009, p. 1). Responding further to the Hon Alison Xamon, the Hon Simon O'Brien stated that three hundred and thirty six incidents occurred at stations and in their immediate surrounds, and fifty eight incidents occurred on trains during that period. The Hon Simon O'Brien expounded further:

Transit officers attended and dealt with two hundred and seventy six incidents whilst the offence/s was still being committed or the offender was still present upon their arrival at the scene. The Public Transport Authority does not have the information readily available with respect to the breakdown of the two hundred and seventy six incidents into train lines and to get this specific information would require considerable research which would divert staff away from their normal duties. Accordingly, I am not prepared to allocate the States' resources to provide a response with this level of detail (Western Australia Legislative Council, 2009a, p. 1).

The incidence of violence on the rail system was raised again in Parliament in August 2010 by the Hon Andrew Waddell with specific reference to one particular line:

Of all the train lines in the state, the [South] train line has the worst record for assaults. Since 2009 more than 51 passengers and 45 public officers have been attacked while on the [South] line or at stations on the [South] (Western Australia Legislative Council, 2010, p. 1)

Lacking analysis of the factors contributing to these events, and an understanding of where the violent incidents are taking place, particular trouble spots are not identified; emerging crime patterns are not detected; and there is no local accountability for events that occur on the rail system. Without this information resources cannot be targeted to deal strategically with emerging crime patterns

(Henry, 2003). Devoid of relevant information, it is not possible for managers to implement a systematic, targeted approach to reduce the violent behaviour and, consequently, reduce injuries to transit officers and the public. This is very different from what happens during interventions when crime is successfully halted. Henry (2003) believes that in the early 1990s effective leadership was the reason that crime reduced dramatically, and quality of life improved in New York. As Henry (2003, p. 9) states:

any police agency's success in fulfilling its basic mission and in conducting its business depends greatly upon the kind of commitment, support, interest and coordination provided by its political leadership.

In spite of this, it would appear from the statement above in Parliament by the then Minister for Transport, Hon Simon O'Brien, that the Western Australian Government does not wish to encourage such leadership or provide any additional support to facilitate a strategic management approach to dealing with the violence occurring on the rail system. However more recently, there has been increasing publicity around violence on the trains, and this has put pressure on the Government to improve the situation. For example, an article published in *The Sunday Times* argues that "one in 10 transit guards on Perth trains is off sick on workers' compensation" (Paddenburg, 2010, p. 37). The opposition Labour Party has also exerted pressure in parliament. The Hon Ken Travers, Shadow Minister for Transport, is pressing for a parliamentary committee inquiring into the violence on the public transport system (Western Australia Legislative Council, 2011c). The growing concern was recently acknowledged by the Hon Troy Buswell, current Minister for Transport, who reported in Parliament that: "we will engage with the transit officers, and we will invest and will leave no stone unturned in continuing to make our trains safe" (Western Australia Legislative Council, 2011a). However, to date no definitive plan to reduce crime and injuries on the rail system has been announced.

Although the RTO has reluctantly provided some information on the number of violent assaults occurring on the transit system, no information has been provided on how many of these incidents lead to transit officer injuries. Nor is there any indication of the nature of the injuries received by transit officers. Additionally, the above figures cited do not include incidents attended by transit officers that do not

meet the given definition of ‘violent’, but which led to injury. These can include events giving rise to psychological trauma, for example a suicide on track. According to WorkCover WA, the average cost for a lost time workers’ compensation claim for all industries in Western Australia in 2007/2008 was \$28,505 (Mahony, 2010, p. 3). However, this figure would not include the organisation’s internal costs such as recruitment, retraining and replacement. Like all rail safety workers, transit officers have very strict medical standards that officers must meet prior to going on track (Standards Australia, 2006a). Following any absence from work due to serious illness or injury (National Transport Commission Australia, 2004), transit officers require re-testing to ensure they still meet the medical standards in place for rail safety workers. Reducing the injuries and thereby reducing costs would be a significant financial saving for the organisation. During the 2008/2009 year there were a total of 115 workers’ compensation claims with a reported value of \$1,455,106 (Public Transport Authority of Western Australia, 2009). This figure would not include hidden costs. No further information on the nature of the workers’ compensation injuries was given. In the 2010/2011 annual report, the carrying provisions for the workers’ compensation at the end of the year was listed at \$5,546,000 (Public Transport Authority of Western Australia, 2011, p. 141). The annual report defined the amount of the provision as “the estimated outstanding value of claims plus any actuarial assessments of the previous years adjusted fund contribution as at the end of reporting period” (Public Transport Authority of Western Australia, 2011, p. 124). This total was for the whole organisation and no further breakdown was provided.

The management in the transit officer section of the RTO does not undertake any health and safety benchmarking, even with similar organisations or professions with comparable responsibilities. Professions with some similarities to transit officers include police, transit police and other front line security staff in different environments. Rather than evaluate their own performance and work to improve it, managers in the area keep a tight control on performance data. For example, they will not allow the use of internal statistics in this thesis, or share and compare information with other transit security organisations I visited. However, benchmarking need not only involve comparing statistics with like organisations, it can provide year on year evidence of improvement or deterioration, as well as



highlighting opportunities to learn from other organisations. As the UK Health and Safety Executive (1999, p. 1) explain, benchmarking is:

More about continuously learning from others, learning more about your organisation's strengths and weaknesses in the process, and then acting on the lessons learnt. This is what leads to real improvement.

## **6.10 Summary**

This chapter has documented the transit officers' role including the various duties they undertake on stations, trains or in delta vehicle patrols, and has provided an overview of their experiences across the rail system. During the research, I was able to examine issues which transit officers considered influenced their safety. These include the choice of equipment they are provided with; the ambiguity that surrounds the transit officer role in relation to revenue protection officers; the need for greater understanding of the transit officer role by other areas of the organisation; the variations in supervisor abilities; and the communication practices that exist within the transit officer cadre. Barriers to sharing information between the various rail lines; blocks in communication up and down the hierarchy; and transit officers' feeling less than confident when communicating with the travelling public were all raised as communication issues. Having undertaken the transit officer training, I was able to understand these transit officers' concerns.

My deep immersion in the transit officer cadre enabled me to discover the different subcultures on each line. However, despite these variations, there were also many cultural similarities between all transit officers. These shared characteristics were similar to cultural traits identified by previous researchers with law enforcement officers worldwide, such as loyalty to their fellow officers and an attitude that says 'you don't dob in a mate' (Chan, et al., 2003; Crank, 2004; Van Maanen, 1973). Additionally, all the transit officers in the RTO shared a concern that they were isolated from the rest of the organisation. They considered themselves a 'necessary evil' that the organisation had to have, but did not really want (personal notes).

In spite of the restrictions placed by the RTO on sharing information with other organisations, both for comparison purposes and to improve outcomes, I nevertheless found similar organisations worldwide who embraced the contrary

view. These organisations willingly passed on information that might assist in improving communication practices and transit officer safety. The following chapter details the lessons learnt from these ‘high achieving’ organisations.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **BEST PRACTICE IN TRANSIT POLICING ORGANISATIONS**

#### **7. INTRODUCTION**

The ten months fieldwork, including training, working with the transit officers and conducting the interviews had given me an appreciation of the many difficulties transit officers face on a daily basis. During this time I also developed a deep understanding of the workplace culture, and the practices and communication skills that transit officers use. Armed with this knowledge I wanted to learn from other organisations nationally, and internationally, as to what training and strategies these organisations have in place that control and reduce the injury rate for their officers; minimising crime and anti-social behaviour on the rail system; and reducing the divide between management and transit officers. In other words, I wished to examine what is considered ‘best-practice’ in transit policing. I am using the term ‘transit officer’, ‘transit police’, and transit special constable as being interchangeable in this chapter, since the discussion ranges across a number of rail services which use different terminologies for what is, effectively, the RTO transit officer role.

Best-practice tends to be a ‘catch all’ term which over the years has come to mean the practices which provide the optimum return for the business. The idea that there is ‘best-practice’ in an industry nevertheless provides standards and benchmarks which lesser achieving organisations can strive towards. In this instance, I had identified communication skills and practices as being a significant factor in both organisational effectiveness and in the safety of RTO transit officers. I therefore wanted to examine the communication training and practices of officers in these high achieving organisations. Such communication included within the organisation; between transit police and management; how communication barriers across rail lines are dealt with; plus external communication; that is to say, transit police skills in communicating with the general public. I was also interested in researching how these organisations dealt with the transition from transit police trainee in the classroom to operational transit police officer on the rail system, and what training supervisors undertook for their leadership positions. Additionally, my

aim was to examine how other organisations investigated and dealt with incidents, and what strategies these organisations put in place to reduce the crime and anti-social behaviour on their rail systems.

My initial investigation into transit policing organisations was via the World Wide Web. Criteria included what information an organisation had disclosed on the Web, especially as this related to their injury statistics; standards, policies and procedures. I particularly focused my research on transit policing organisations in countries that had a similar culture to Australia, ideally they were English language based and had similar legal penalties for offences committed on the rail system. Focusing on countries meeting these general criteria, the transit police in the organisations chosen could be expected to encounter anti-social behaviour and violence on the rail system similar to that experienced by the RTO transit officers. This criterion excluded, for example, the transit police on the Singapore high speed rail line, where penalties are stricter. The trains there are considered safe and passengers are generally well behaved. The remaining organisations were examined further to determine the ones with the closest structural fit to that which positions the transit officers within the structure of the RTO. Some of the organisations that I initially evaluated were excluded from the research in this next phase. For example, I found that the transit officer-type cadre was sometimes not a distinct transit policing entity, rather they were part of a police force that could be moved to other duties. No two organisations were the same. In some instances the transit police were part of the Railway Authority with special police powers such as the Toronto Railway Special Constables; or authorised transit police such as the New Jersey Transit Police who report to the Rail Authority; or the New York Transit Police who are a discrete section of the New York Police Department (NYPD). Transit officers in RailCorp Sydney Australia proved to be structured most similarly to the RTO transit officers. RailCorp transit officers are responsible to the Rail Authority and have similar powers on the rail system as RTO transit officers, although they do not have the use of pepper spray. RailCorp transit officers were also included on the basis of their much lower, and still declining, injury rate identifying them as being among best-practice organisations. At the time of my visit to RailCorp, the New South Wales Parliament was evaluating whether the officers were going to be taken over by the New South Wales police. However, this has not as yet eventuated. The

Toronto Special Constables were in a similar position and were also included in the study. In other areas of Australia, the officers that are on the trains provide a customer service function only, with the state police Force, who are not dedicated to the rail system, dealing with crime and any anti-social behaviour. Queensland Rail is now in the process of evaluating the structure and role of their officers, and has been examining other models of transit officer duties including the RTO's model.

Following my initial research, I personally contacted the short-listed transit police organisations and discussed my interests further. My final selection comprised the British Transport Police Leeds, who cover rail transport in the north east of England, Great Britain; New York Police Department (NYPD) Transit Police, who police the metropolitan subway in New York; Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) New York, who police the Long Island and Metro-North Railways in New York; Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) Transit Police, Boston; New Jersey Transit Police Department Newark New Jersey; Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) Police Department San Francisco; Metro Transit Police Department (MTPD) Washington; Special Constable Service Toronto Transit Commission and Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority Police Service (GVTAPS). I also included RailCorp in New South Wales. I arranged to visit these organisations to discuss their training and examine the strategies they have in place which may influence their low injury rates. All of the organisations were proud of what they had achieved and were generous with their time in assisting this research endeavour.

The majority of the transit police recruits in this national and international sample undertake basic police officer training at one of the police academies, colleges or universities prior to undertaking the rail-specific training with the relevant rail organisation. However, a number of agencies have also established their own academy such as the MBTA Transit Police. At the Metro Transit Police Washington, a stand-alone site has recently been established exclusively for Metro Transit Police training (Metro Transit Police, 2009). All transit police training includes the specific legislation relating to railways plus the railway safe working practices and procedures necessary for officers who work on the rail track. Where an agency has a rail system that extends into neighbouring states, officers are required to be certified to work in each of those separate jurisdictions. Differences

between various states can include frequency and amount of retraining requirements, plus issues such as the number of hours to be spent on specific topics in the training schedule. Transit officers at RailCorp, and Transit Special Constables in Toronto, undertake their own 'in house' specific course tailored to their local railway environment.

## **7.1 Field Training Officers**

The 'best-practice' organisations visited for this research all have a field training program to assist newly- graduated probationary transit officers make the transition from being a rookie in training school to being an officer performing their duties competently in the field. The program supports and assesses the officers' performance as they initially observe and learn from experienced officers, gradually implementing their newly acquired skills. The officers who are appointed as field training officers or, as the Toronto Transit Special Constables refer to them, Coach Officers, undertake specific training such as 'train the trainer' and/or 'assessor training' to equip them to mentor and assess trainee officers in the field. Trainees are paired up with a field training officer. In some jurisdictions the trainees remain with the same officer for the whole time, whilst in other agencies they are moved on a regular basis. This is the case with the BART Police Department San Francisco, where new graduates from training school are assigned a different officer every two weeks. In RailCorp Sydney the transit officers spend three months in the training school, followed by three months with a trainer on the track. The training is still not fully completed until the new officer has spent three months in a team environment. The field training officer positions are not necessarily a promotion, although the NYPD Transit Police do have a training officer assigned to each district. Instead, the officers undertaking the positions hold a certain status amongst their cadre, and receive a small percentage increase per hour on their normal pay when undertaking the training task. In the situation of the MBTA, transit police trainers receive extra vacation days per year. The officers occupying these positions are experienced officers, who in some agencies have been recommended to the role by their supervisors; or have volunteered and been through a rigorous selection process. The chosen officers are generally articulate and are chosen because they demonstrate high ethical standards. When partnered up with a new graduate, the field training officer initially takes the lead role in any situation they encounter and, as the

graduate becomes more familiar with the practical application of their role, the training officer becomes the silent partner with the trainee managing the situation. This approach enables the field training officer to assess the trainee's competence in the field. The field officer is able to advise the trainee of any improvements to performance that could or should be made; demonstrates effective communication skills with the public, and supports the newly- graduated transit officer as they develop confidence in dealing with various circumstances. In some organisations, for example the MBTA, towards the end of the field training period the trainer may travel in plain clothes and just observe how the trainee deals with the various situations that confront them. The field training officers fill in a daily workplace performance form and submit regular reports to the organisation based on the trainee's performance. All elements of the training have to be practically demonstrated on track.

In contrast to the above, when the trainee transit officers from RTO graduate, they are allocated to any area for eight shifts or less 'familiarisation' with the rail system. The new graduates are then rostered as a full member of the transit officer cadre. However, as transit officer Nola, who is one of the more experienced officers, pointed out to me:

They just don't have any confidence in themselves and I can see that, so the shit-heads that are out there are [also] going to see them like that. And they won't make eye contact with people; they'll be very timid in what they say and ... they won't speak with any authority in their voice and tell people the way it's meant to be.

The RTO officers are initially on probation and have a work book which lists the practical components of the transit officer role which have to be undertaken by the officers. However, there is no formal assessment process of the performance of those duties. The supervisor will sign off a particular element in the assessment book, even though they have not received any training themselves, either as being a supervisor or in assessing other staff members' competencies. As transit officer Frank told me:

Basically once they put the blue shirt on that's it, and you're considered fully qualified to do everything everyone else can do, which of course is ridiculous. What everyone knows is different. But with no formal scheme for mentoring or on the job training, basically, you know, 'watch and learn'. It doesn't work because you

get a lot of informal stuff when you work with someone who's got a bit of experience. They'll tell you, you know everyone's got a different approach, watch, learn, figure out what works, figure out what you want to try and don't – and don't just believe there's only one way of dealing with something, there's always got to be a multiple choice. It just depends on how you do it, the time and place.

Currently, there is a disconnection between the training department and the officers on track. The trainers are not able to spend any time in the field to evaluate whether the practices taught remain relevant for the tasks undertaken by transit officers. One trainer told me that he realised that his operational experience had a shelf life:

I would like to get my qualifications up to speed again and go out there as an operational transit officer and work the lines again, even if it is on a weekend or a Saturday night or something like that.....That way I can see if there is any major changes to operational tactics, major operational procedures and just have a look see and have a look at where we can improve on some of the training systems...

After the initial training, the next time the trainers see the newly graduated officers is when they attend the training department for their twelve month refresher course in the 'use of pepper spray' and 'baton and handcuffs techniques'. Consequently, there is not constant reinforcement of learnt skills. Instead, as Schein (2004) predicts in similar situations, transit officers will, in their quest to fit in with their new environment, adopt the methods and practices of the group they are working with. These practices may not be correct; however the status quo will be maintained and the existing culture will prevail. Additionally, there is no formal feedback loop to the training department if an incident occurs on track. As Dennis, one of the trainers, told me, the training department does not get to hear about the injuries transit officers receive; rather, any knowledge of possible shortcomings in transit officer training is gained by the "grapevine and personal contact".

## **7.2 Supervisor Training**

As previously mentioned in this thesis, all the 'best-practice' organisations visited had detailed training and retraining for supervisors, both prior to commencing their supervisory positions, and in terms of ongoing training and support whilst in those positions. Subjects covered in training included leadership and building an



effective team; safety and incident management including debriefing following an incident; investigation of incidents; effective communication skills to optimise team performance, including conflict resolution skills; monitoring performance and motivation of officers; team briefings; effective use of available resources, report writing, time management and fifteen-minute roll call management. This roll call is the time spent at the beginning of the shift where the supervisor notifies the staff what has occurred on the railway system in the previous shifts, passes on any relevant information required for their shift, and uses any remaining time to educate the officers and enforce safety requirements. Ongoing training for supervisors can include subjects such as advanced people skills, or a particular management or senior leadership unit which may be undertaken in-house, or at one of the police academies or universities.

In a number of the agencies visited, the transit police officer may have undertaken a number of varying special assignments and roles before being appointed to a supervisor's position, often accompanied by additional training. These roles included K9 (canine) training in agencies which had dogs, for example the New Jersey Transit Police and MBTA Transit Police; an emergency vehicle operation course; special weapons and tactics (SWAT) team training, which equips an officer to be part of a highly-trained mobile response team; defensive driving; investigation training and plain clothes operations training. Fifty per cent of the MBTA supervisors had previously been 'use of force' instructors. The actual timing and organisation of supervisor training varied between the organisations. This ranged from the MBTA Transit Police organisation which had a two-week training course between each level of seniority to the MTA Transit Police which had a three to four week supervisors' course before a new supervisor commenced in their position. All organisations had ongoing block training for supervisors. I noted the American agencies were particularly geared to training which dealt with terrorism, with officers taking part in Patriot or Homeland Security Training. Multi-jurisdictional collaboration and training exercises were common; with national incident command, and city-wide incident management, protocols in place to deal with security-related issues.

In the MBTA all lieutenants (similar to other transit police organisations, these are officers in a supervisory position, usually in charge of a particular area, line or

district) are required to spend time in the Internal Affairs Branch which investigates complaints from the public or wrong doings by any transit police officer. The time spent in the branch provides these supervisors with an understanding of the process that occurs following a complaint against a transit police officer. The time involved in examining all the details also hones the supervisor's investigative skills. This experience enables supervisors to see that the Internal Affairs Branch is not out to charge an officer, or discipline an officer unfairly, but to carry out 'due diligence' in their investigation to determine whether or not there was misconduct on the officer's part. In contrast, in spite of a talk at the beginning of the transit officer training by the Manager, Internal Affairs, I found when working with the RTO transit officers and supervisors that there was a lack of understanding of the processes involved in the Internal Affairs Branch. This resulted in officers telling me they regarded the branch as 'a big black hole' (personal notes). Complaints from passengers about transit officers were fully investigated by this branch, but as transit officer Fred told me:

We take them [offenders] to court and they're innocent till they're proven guilty. If somebody makes a complaint about us, we're guilty until we're proven innocent. ... I don't know if that's government, that's procedure, that's the way it goes for us and coppers, but it's just ridiculous.

Although transit officers and supervisors realised that the Internal Affairs Branch had a job to do, their main concern was about the time it took to do it. If a supervisor spent a period working with the Internal Affairs Branch, this would provide an understanding of the processes involved. Some of the more senior transit officers, such as transit officer Freda, realised there was a thorough process to follow but, like others, she was concerned at the delays in outcomes:

You might get one e-mail from internals saying that the investigation is nearly coming to an end we just need to do this or you may not; it might just be hanging there, and you'll get a call to issue a statement and they'll call you to come in and do an interview and then it's just the waiting game. Overall it's, the 'Internals' have obviously got a job to do....

If RTO supervisors rotated through the Internal Affairs Branch they would obtain a greater understanding of the workings of the department and could provide additional and relevant support to reduce the time lag between an initial complaint against a transit officer and the final outcome.

### **7.3 Key Performance Indicators**

Managers and supervisors in all the organisations visited have a range of key performance indicators (KPIs) which they are expected to meet. Their performance on the job is evaluated against those indicators. A number of the indicators were common between all organisations; however, there were also some indicators that were specific to a particular organisation. Often certain KPIs were based on special problems that individual organisations had to deal with. For example, one of the known problems that the British Transit Police have to deal with is the anti-social behaviour of soccer football fans as they travel by train to watch their teams play an away game. The dates for these events are known well in advance which enables officers to meet together and start their planning three months ahead of the event. A full operation -specific risk assessment for the particular game is undertaken. All identified risks are assessed as high, medium or low and procedures and control measures are put in place to reduce the risk. Sometimes commanders, their supervisors and transit police teams receive intelligence reports indicating premeditated public disorder. Alternatively, it may be known that ‘trouble makers’ will be travelling on that day. This information is incorporated into the risk assessment along with the control measures to be taken, such as increasing the number of officers on duty that day to deal with any outbreaks of disorder. The British Transit Police take into consideration where rival fans may meet up, which could result in injuries; and this possible scenario is incorporated into their risk assessment. Additionally, all areas of the rail system which could pose a risk or hazard on the day are considered. Crowd management at stations, overcrowding on trains, overcrowding trackside and communications and first aid all receive consideration, for example (British Transit Police, 2007). Supervisors and their senior commanders are required to sign off on these risk assessments and ensure that officers have controls in place. Whilst it is understood that risk assessments are dynamic documents which may require altering as hazards develop or change, requiring additional controls to eliminate or reduce the risk; nevertheless, the risk assessment document is used to develop briefing notes for the event and, as the policy states:

All supervisors are required by law to brief all officers under their command of the hazards and the control measures in place, to reduce or eliminate these risks. Supervisors should record the names of all

those officers briefed, [and] provide them with a copy of this document, which should be signed for on the attached letter.

(British Transit Police, 2009b, p. 1)

Supervisors are responsible and accountable for ensuring these risk assessments, briefing notes, distribution lists and sign off by all participating staff are finalised.

Supervisors in the 'best-practice' transit policing organisations have responsibility for investigating and bringing to a close the crimes in their area of control; investigating all transit police injuries; reporting on them, and dealing with any safety issues arising. Each person in the chain of command up to the Chief of the organisation has a responsibility for any and all injuries occurring to transit police officers. An injury is taken very seriously and all injuries are investigated thoroughly. The outcomes of these investigations are shared with all areas within the organisation. Following the success that former New York Police Commissioner, and former Transit Police Chief, William Bratton had in reducing crime in New York in the early to mid nineties, both in the subways and on the ground (Bratton & Knobler, 1998), law enforcement agencies have embraced and built on the Compstat model. This was initially conceived by Jack Maple, and refined by Bratton and Maple to the point where it was usable (Henry, 2003). Compstat is short for 'Computer Comparison Statistics' (Godown, 2009, p. 1), and is built on a management paradigm that assists an organisation to achieve its mission and goals by holding police managers accountable for their performance by the measurement of statistics (DeLorenzi, et al., 2006; Shane, 2004). Briefly described, Compstat is:

transferable, compatible and replicable in any organisation or environment. In a police organisation, Compstat functions as a crime control process manifested in recurring meetings, usually weekly, during which the agency's performance indicators are reviewed critically for opportunities for improvement. This organisational management philosophy concept and tool combines a classic problem-solving model with accountability at all levels of an organisation.

(Godown, 2009, p. 1)

As Peters and Waterman Jr. (2004) found in their analysis of what excellent companies did that made them so successful, continuous improvement paradigms

follow a double-edged approach by looking outward at the customer with innovative problem solving, in the transit officer case community and crime; and internally, where the organisation focuses on systems and processes such as communication, autonomy, accountability, an open door policy and a focus on people (DeLorenzi, et al., 2006; Godown, 2009; Henry, 2003). Peters and Waterman's approach parallels the Compstat paradigm. As Shane (2004) identifies, the chief would set specific objectives and these send a message to all levels of staff within the organisation regarding what the chief considers is important. In their context, Compstat can be used to "ensure accountability is fixed and the desired results are achieved" (Shane, 2004, p. 2). For example, in the NYPD Transit Police, the incident statistics and details of investigations are reported weekly at the Crime Reduction Meetings held every Monday which involve all districts. These meetings are chaired by the Chief of the NYPD Transit Police who reports to the Chief of the whole NYPD. Crime Reduction Meetings are part of the transit police Compstat accountability process, where the police lieutenants from each area of the transit police system are accountable for what has occurred in their area. The lieutenants can be questioned by anybody from any of the other areas on the information they present. Crime and injury statistics relating to incidents that occur on the transit system are also published openly (personal notes).

This accountability process ensures that lieutenants take responsibility for their district. They know exactly what has occurred, where their problem areas are, what they are doing about them and will subsequently report on the steps they have taken to deal with the issues (personal notes). Compstat was initially developed as a tool in the fight to reduce crime. Over recent years however Compstat has continued to evolve as other police organisations extend and enhance the model to include other accountability data. Following Bratton's appointment to the Los Angeles Police Department, Gascon, Assistant Chief of Police Los Angeles, with Bratton's support, set about improving the ability of Compstat to assist all areas to perform at their optimum capacity and developed the 'Compstat plus' program (Gascon, 2005). This program enhancement built on the previous principles of Compstat including: analysis of statistics; inspection and accountability at all levels; and added the use of "more in-depth auditing methods, mentorship, and close collaboration" (Gascon, 2005, p. 1). Many authors view Compstat as the most important element in the

transformation of policing during the past fifteen years (DeLorenzi, et al., 2006; Godown, 2009; Henry, 2003; Serpas, 2008; Silverman, 1999).

## **7.4 ‘Broken Windows’ Theory**

Wilson and Kelling (1982) highlighted an important indicator of a sense of disorder in a community when they advanced the ‘Broken Windows’ theory. What their theory refers to is that something as small and innocuous as a broken window can in fact send a signal to the community that a building is uncared for and that more serious crime might be condoned in the building and in the area. As described by Henry (2003, p. 117) below:

The ‘Broken Windows’ theory suggests that there is both a high correlation and a causal link between community disorder and more serious crime: when community disorder is permitted to flourish or when disorderly conditions or problems are left untended, they actually cause more serious crime. ‘Broken windows’ are a metaphor for community disorder which, as Wilson and Kelling (1982) use the term, includes the violation of informal social norms for public behaviour as well as quality of life offenses such as littering, graffiti, playing loud radios, aggressive panhandling, and vandalism.

When William Bratton became Transit Police Chief in 1990, which preceded his appointment to Police Commissioner of New York City, Boston and subsequent appointment to Chief of Los Angeles Police, crime on the New York subway was rife. Fare evasion was high, thieves brazenly stole tokens at the turnstiles, homeless people lived and died in the subway, hawkers sold their wares, and aggressive people begged for money while drug dealers plied their trade. This all contributed to the chaos that was evident on the subway system (Bratton, 1999; Bratton & Knobler, 1998). Using the ‘Broken Windows’ theory, Bratton, with the support of Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, instituted a policy of ‘zero tolerance’ on the subway system with full enforcement of all the subway rules and regulations. Bratton believed that if people got away with minor crimes such as fare evasion, this gave perpetrators of more serious crimes the impression that they could get away with anything. Gradually the ‘zero tolerance’ policy changed people’s perceptions, and criminals came to realise that they would be vigorously pursued. It took about six months for a culture change to be put in place to enforce all the rules and deal with crime. In collaboration with other agencies and social service providers, an outreach program

was developed to deal with the homeless. The disorder problem amongst school children was dealt with by instituting a truancy program and a safe passage program. Transit police found that about one in seven people arrested already had a warrant out against them, and they strenuously followed up all outstanding warrants. A clear message was sent to the community that the subway system was firmly under the control of the transport police (Bratton, 1999; Bratton & Knobler, 1998). Crime on the subway declined rapidly and continues to decline.

All the American transit police agencies I visited subscribe to the 'Broken Windows' theory. Additionally, it was interesting to note that transit police I spoke with on the field trip knew about the theory, and were keen to pass on the information. Putting this theory into practice has had a positive effect in the United States' transport environment. In New York, for example, no train is allowed to be in service with a scratch on the window or graffiti on the rail car. The train will be taken out of service rather than be allowed to operate if it is in anyway defaced. Additionally, any graffiti anywhere in the railway environs is immediately cleaned. This policy helps develop a culture where the public are motivated to value the physical environment of the train and its surrounds; while such evaluation contributes to a low crime rate. As Henry (2003, p. 18) advocates: "if little problems were taken care of they would not develop into big problems". Hence, the sustained and targeted 'quality-of-life' enforcement delivered through the 'Broken Windows' approach has been accepted by U.S. transit police as an effective crime fighting tool (personal notes). The 'broken windows' theory highlights a serious problem in our society where small details can signify much bigger problems. The community feels safer, and the risk of serious crime occurring is reduced significantly, when 'Broken Windows' are addressed (Henry, 2003; Levine, 2005).

## **7.5 Behavioural Safety Program**

The Toronto Special Constables have introduced a program called CRIME: collectively reducing injuries and minimising exposures. It applies throughout their cadre and is a peer-to-peer behavioural-based safety program, where one of the transit special constables evaluates the work method of one of their peers, to determine whether or not they are working with optimal safety. At the end of the observation, the observer documents the findings and provides verbal feedback to the person being observed. Supervisors also carry out observations on their peers. The

aim of CRIME is to reduce injuries and develop and sustain a positive safety culture amongst special constables. All officers are expected to undertake three observations per week, and this duty forms one of their KPIs. Training is provided for the special constables prior to them undertaking these tasks. The information from the observations is kept anonymous, and cannot be used for any disciplinary purposes (personal notes). Management believes the program is helping reduce the injury rate and contributing towards an improved safety culture through the full engagement of the workforce in monitoring safe work practices (personal notes).

An important aspect of a behavioural-based safety program is defining what constitutes critical behaviours. This is combined with the development of specific checklists of what to observe. The behaviours monitored in such a program must be specific; observable, that is overt behaviours which are countable and recordable; under the person's control; and monitored in an objective way (Geller, 1996). As a result of the Toronto Special Constables' observations, unsafe behaviours which might previously have been unconscious, now become conscious and can be corrected (personal notes). The Toronto Special Constable Services has devised a check list that is applicable to their specific tasks to determine whether behaviours are safe or at-risk (Toronto Special Constable Services, 2009). These performance-behaviours include body position, such as whether it is in the line of fire; eyes on task/hands; body use/ergonomics such as overextended/cramped and proper posture; tools and equipment such as the condition or use of the special constable equipment; procedures such as communication of hazards; the use of personal protective equipment such as a reflective vest, safety shoes and body armour; the work environment, for example walking and working surfaces; and particular special constable services operations such as maintaining interview stance, maintaining visual contact, working in pairs, how they perform take-downs, their use of OC spray and the professionalism of the way they go about their duties. Any other exposures or safety concerns are also evaluated for safe or at-risk behaviours (Toronto Special Constable Services, 2009).

On completion of a report the observer discusses the findings with the person under observation. The specific at-risk behaviours are documented, why it was an at-risk behaviour is discussed; for example, what are the possible consequences; the reason why the person was carrying out the at-risk behaviour; and a solution to the



problem as this develops in the exchange between the observer and the observed. The outcome of the observation and discussion is documented (Toronto Special Constable Services, 2009).

Behavioural safety programs in industry, such as this one, have grown in popularity over the past twenty years as organisations have introduced a range of strategies to reduce accidents and incidents in the workplace. Previous studies have highlighted the success of such programs and the reduction of injuries that occur (Geller, 1996; Krause, 1997). More recently, however, studies have identified a number of potential failings with these programs (DeJoy, 2005; Hopkins, 2006c). These programs are usually concentrated upon frontline employees, whereas management behaviour is critical in the development of a safety culture within an organisation (Anderson, 2004; Flin, 2003). A number of researchers now argue that trust and open communication between management and employees is necessary for a safety culture to exist, and without this trust and communication behavioural safety programs will not be successful (Hopkins, 2006c; Petersen, 1999). Anderson (2004) hypothesised that the focus on the individual draws attention away from process safety and ignores the latent conditions of risk and danger that may be present. In particular, risks which are low probability but high consequence may be ignored. Researchers have previously theorised that a relationship exists between organisational culture, management error, the safety management system and the root causes of accidents (DeJoy, 2005; Hopkins, 2006c; Lunt, Bates, Bennett, & Hopkinson, 2008). In contrast, the concentration on the behaviours of frontline employees tends to view employees as the main cause of accidents, rather than looking at issues that are under management control such as reviewing the safety system or designing-out the risks (Anderson, n.d.; DeJoy, 2005; Hopkins, 2006c). In the railway environment this management-level perspective could include issues such as designing safer stations, better lighting, maintenance issues, fatigue, communication, training or identifying any other contributing factors that can lead to an incident.

Whilst there has been some success with behaviour-based safety programs, concentrating on such behaviours to the exclusion of developing a robust safety culture and safety system will not directly address reasons for the risk-taking behaviour that employees exhibit, or other root causes of accidents in the work place

(Hopkins, 2006c). In this research project, the essential requirements of trust and communication between employees and management are absent. This makes the successful introduction of a behavioural-based safety program in RTO almost impossible. The transit officers would almost certainly view the program as management trying to find fault with them. As transit officer Peter remarked to me:

One of my biggest gripes is there just seems to be so much discipline happening and not much recognition, which is quite demoralising. Basically a lot of the good deeds that get done just go unnoticed and all the rest of it, and all the bad things, no matter how, they all seem to be broadcast to the world...

While I was working alongside the transit officers on track, a petition was started by the officers and was signed by about eighty per cent of the transit officers, to try and get rid of one of the managers. However, the petition was not successful. In Nola's words:

I don't think any of the troops really have any confidence in the management structure here, that's why the petition....Everyone's quite happy with this job, it's a great job, it's just the way it's structured through management.

## **7.6 'Best-practice' Communication**

In a safety-critical environment such as rail, communication is essential for the safe operation of the rail system. As previously noted in this thesis, the importance of communication has been highlighted by previous rail accident investigations where communication was found to be a contributing factor to the events occurring (Hopkins, 2005). Further, communication is the important channel that links the transit officer with the railway environment and with the passengers that use the trains. Communicating with the public, working with transport users, and instilling confidence that transit officers are labouring to provide a safe railway environment was very much to the forefront of the world's 'best-practice' agencies. Bratton and Knobler, (1998, p. 255) refer to their style of policing as "the three P's – partnership, problem solving and prevention". This was approach of all the agencies I visited. The transit police shared information with other agencies, educated and worked with their communities to solve problems, and used analysis of incidents and crime to prevent reoccurrences.

### **7.6.1 Inter agency communication**

I was impressed by the willingness of these ‘best-practice’ agencies to share information; not only within their organisation, but additionally between organisations. There was a general attitude of cooperation in their endeavour to reduce crime and improve safety and security on transport systems. Analysis of all incidents was ongoing, and intelligence information was shared. For instance, the MBTA Transit Police have an Intelligence Department which collects and analyses information about security, crime and safety on transport incidents locally, nationally and internationally. The information is processed and presented in a weekly transit police bulletin – *Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority Transit Police Weekly Bulletin*. This document includes incidents that have occurred on their own transit system including suspicious events, unattended packages and the arrests that have occurred on each line. Also included are upcoming events in the Boston region during the next week; pictures and descriptions of any persons of interest that are wanted for crimes committed on their system including the details and location of the crime; and pictures of graffiti and associated tags (an identifying signature mark left by the perpetrator of the crime). These can all be shared with other organisations. This *MBTA Weekly Bulletin* is accompanied by a request that any other organisation experiencing equivalent challenges, for example identifying similar tags, should contact the MBTA Transit Police Intelligence Department. The MBTA Transit Police are proud of the work their officers undertake and photographs of any of their officers being presented with achievement or commendation awards are also included in the *Bulletin*.

The *Weekly Bulletin* also addresses the current risk of a terrorist attack on a U.S. mass transit system. In the past it has also included information such as “Indicators of Preoperational Surveillance and Preparations for an Attack” and “Suggested Protective Measures” from the Department of Homeland Security (Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, 2010a). The Department of Homeland Security regularly issues alerts and other information to federal, state, local and tribal government agencies; the private sector, and other entities; to inform and alert these agencies regarding possible terrorist activities (Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, 2010b). One of their latest concerns is the increasing sophistication of remote surveillance cameras and associated links to the internet

which allow terrorists to undertake surveillance from a distance (Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, 2010b). Details of any new type of weapon, or new disguise of a weapon that the transit police discover when dealing with offenders, are also included in this weekly bulletin. This ensures that all transit police officers are aware of new developments amongst criminals and terrorists. Other information includes new technological developments related to transport or security such as the CCTV cameras recently being trialled at Logan Airport Boston, and at the port in Boston. These cameras enable remote panning and focussing into a particular area; or have the capacity to follow a person without losing any of the peripheral vision that would normally occur. All this information, along with any general news from the Department of Homeland Security, is provided to all transit police officers. Other interested transit police organisations and law enforcement personnel are also supplied with the *Bulletin* upon request. The MBTA Transit Police have been kind enough to provide me with a weekly copy of their Bulletin throughout the period since my visit, and this has enabled me to keep up to date with the latest transit police security news from their area.

The cooperation between the transit police agencies in various jurisdictions extends to assisting another transit police force when there is a particular event requiring additional security. Such an event occurred not long before I arrived in the United States. This was the inauguration of President Obama. The Washington MTPD explained the planning that went into monitoring the security on the transit system during that time. Transit police from many other jurisdictions travelled to Washington to assist them on the day (personal notes). The previous year the MTPD also dealt with the Pope's visit to Washington. As Chief Taborn states below, in the 2008 annual report:

In 2008, MTPD continued its commitment to excellence through increased partnership with over 40 Federal, state and local law enforcement agencies, as well as dozens of local fire and rescue agencies. .... In partnership with the Federal Transit Administration, the MTPD developed a model program for creating an Emergency Management division to consolidate all emergency planning, training and coordination activities within a single office. This model will be used by transit agencies around the Nation to enhance their emergency preparedness, organization and capabilities.

(Metro Transit Police, 2009, p. 5)

Additional interaction between the transit police agencies occurs at conferences, where the latest research is discussed; the Chiefs of Transit Police meetings; interagency collaboration on crime and terrorism; joint security exercises run by the Homeland Department; and transit police officers meeting up at academy or college training courses (personal notes). In Canada, transit police also have the Canadian Police Knowledge Network (CPKN) where information is shared

#### **7.6.2 *Internal communication***

In every transit police agency I visited, information from each rail line is formally shared with the transit police on all rail lines. This includes incident/accident investigation outcomes and any recommendations for improvements; what has occurred during the previous shift on all lines; any people of interest to keep a look out for; any new policy or procedure or updates to existing policies and procedures; the outcomes of any crime analysis that has been undertaken, plus any other relevant internal or external information (personal notes). The interaction between the different areas provides a diversity of opinion when viewing the same event. Additionally, all incidents and accidents were actively used by these organisations to learn from the event and examine the adequacy of their safety systems. The information is normally conveyed at the routine musters at the beginning of each shift. In many of the organisations, transit police sign a form to acknowledge that they have received the information. These forms are collated and become evidence to support a key performance indicator for transit officer supervisors. The forms demonstrate that the information has been conveyed by the supervisor to the transit police officers.

E- learning was also common in these ‘best-practice’ agencies. This could take the form of accessing particular units online, or checking that lessons are learnt from a particular incident. For instance, when an incident has been thoroughly investigated and the contributing factors identified, a CD of the circumstances can be made, which may incorporate actual CCTV footage of the event, a discussion of the incident and steps taken to avoid a reoccurrence. The CD is distributed to all rail lines for the staff to view and learn from the information. In RailCorp, for example, the transit officers sign a form acknowledging that they have viewed the CD. The supervisor returns the form to a central repository where the information is collated to ensure that all transit officers have viewed the information (personal notes).

In organisations where the transit police liaise with, rather than report to, a train operating company, regular communication meetings are held. Additionally, communication was strong vertically and horizontally within the organisations visited. In these organisations the Chief or Head of the Transit Police would begin their day with a briefing on any crimes occurring on the transit system over the previous twenty four hours, any injuries to any of the officers, and the circumstances of the events. The development of the Compstat paradigm is based on the acknowledged importance of timely and accurate information, as this is required to run the program successfully (Henry, 2003).

In contrast to the open ‘two-way’ communication which characterises ‘best-practice’ organisations, the RTO ‘s information flow was restricted, both horizontally and vertically. In fact, it was a breach of rules for the transit officers to view any CCTV footage of anything that occurred on another line, or did not involve themselves. At the time of my fieldwork on track, contributing factors to an event were not analysed so this did not enable any lessons to be learnt from the event. As transit officer James told me:

Seems to be a big secret. Like all the footage here seems to be a secret. They don’t use it for training purposes. All the incidents, even code sevens [suicides] and that, they don’t talk about them. It seems to be a big secret.

Or as Peter said, referring to verbal information:

I sometimes question what is being said to us, because it hasn’t really come directly from up there [management] to down here, it’s gone through a channel. There’s been a few times when things have been said and then later on, someone has said something else, and I go, you know, like, if you heard it directly from up there [management], whether it be in the form of a monthly newsletter or make sure the management came out and have a chat to us, then you’ve heard it directly from the [horse’s] mouth, but it’s all sort of hearsay.

As there is no formal means of communication, the employees develop their own informal way to convey information. As Gilsdorf (1998, p. 175) found “Informal, non-hierarchical means of communication appear to fill in gaps between what employees want to know and what management has time, attention, or inclination to tell them”.

### **7.6.3 *Community communication***

The overseas transit policing organisations visited take a proactive ‘community involvement’ approach. This thinking originates from a ‘community policing’ ideology (Henry, 2003), where police focus on a crime prevention approach, rather than just dealing with the issues once a crime has been committed (Kelling & Coles, 1996; Silverman, 1999). Community policing promotes the concept of the “friendly corner cop” (Silverman, 1999, p. 61), who involves him or herself within the community; attending public meetings, community fairs and schools; committed to the transit police and the community working together to solve problems. For instance, the British Transit Police in Leeds, where I visited, hold at least twelve problem-solving community partnership meetings a year (personal notes), half of which involve public consultation. This program is called Police And Community Together (PACT). The program was developed to listen to, and work with, the community to solve problems rather than transport police activity being solely directed by British Transport Police’s own policing priorities (British Transport Police Neighbourhood Policing Team, 2010). PACT meetings are held every eight weeks in various locations where any member of the public can attend and raise a community concern. Issues that cannot be dealt with at the PACT community meeting, or which require a ‘problem solving action plan’, are referred to the PACT panel. The PACT panel also meets every eight weeks and comprises “volunteers from the Train Operating companies, passenger focus group members, railway chaplains, Salvation Army, local police and anyone else who can represent the whole area” (British Transport Police Neighbourhood Policing Team, 2010, p. 2). The problem and the plan to address it are documented and regular feedback on the progress of the plan is given at both the PACT and PACT panel meetings, and posted on the internet (British Transport Police Neighbourhood Policing Team, 2010). Holding a minimum of twelve problem solving workshops a year with community representatives, in terms of the PACT meetings and the PACT panels, forms one of the performance indicators for the British transit police officer managers (personal notes). The RTO does not have any similar type of program involving the community.

The proactive approach demonstrated by these ‘best-practice’ organisations leads to an enhanced transit officer profile within their respective communities,

enables children to view the transit police officers as approachable, and helps the transit police officer to reinforce the public message that there are significant measures in place to keep the rail system trouble-free, and that committing an offence on the rail system will not be tolerated. Strategies for educating the public ranged from the Washington MTA transit police, sometimes partnered with the National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC), attending community events with 'McGruff' (the crime fighting dog mascot) to educate students on safety and crime prevention (Metro Transit Police, 2009); to the MBTA program called 'operation stop watch', where the transit police unite with other agencies such as schools, courts, probation officers and parole divisions to deal with school truancy. All agencies had various methods for developing intelligence on gangs and gang affiliations. These ranged from representation on the state police's 'youth gang force' to an e-learning program with the Ontario Gang Investigation Service, who educate law enforcement officers and also target young people with programs such as 'Say No To Gangs' (personal notes).

In the past, RTO research has identified that "collaboration between youth services and the transport authority can help each agency better achieve its own goals" (T. Cooper, et al., 2007, p. 78). In that particular program, Drug Arm WA was present on selected train services, usually late night journeys on a weekend, to provide care for young people who were under the influence of drugs or alcohol (T. Cooper, et al., 2007). However, funding for this project was only available for a short time, and whilst the success of the program was noted, the program was outside the RTO's control, and was not continued (T. Cooper, et al., 2007). This is in contrast to overseas transport police organisations who adopt a variety of strategies to interact with the community and deal with anti-social behaviour on the transport system. Such strategies include: conducting a public relations communication campaign around the likelihood of being convicted of assaults on the rail system; prominently displaying penalties for various offences committed on the rail system; and advertising the fact that the transit officer service has plain clothes transit police riding the trains, on platforms and near turnstiles to catch people failing to pay a fare. The transit police organisations believe that the fear factor of being caught will deter some criminals from carrying out a crime on the rail system whilst



providing the added benefit of giving everyday law-abiding passengers the perception of a safer rail system (personal notes).

Prior to the British football season commencing, the British Transport Police write to previous offenders reminding them of the standard of behaviour required on the rail system. The letters sent include a list of penalties that can be imposed should the person reoffend on the rail system. These penalties can include criminal convictions and prison sentences, notification to their employers and other government agencies, bans from licensed premises in city centres and bans on rail travel (British Transit Police, 2009a). Football clubs support Transport Police action and will impose bans on any football fan who is arrested while travelling to or from a game (British Transit Police, 2009a). The British Transport Police also undertake follow up visits with offenders, not necessarily confined to football fan incidents, to remind them that they will be watched on the rail system.

In the RTO, education of the public is limited to educating young children in schools situated near the railway of the dangers associated with the electrified rail system. This education is undertaken by the communications department within RTO, and does not facilitate positive transit officer interaction with children and the community that the 'best-practice' organisations do. RTO statistics for arrests or incidents on the rail system are not published, and only those obtained by journalists under the *Western Australia Freedom of Information Act* ("Freedom of Information Act (WA)," 1992) are available. Recently, notices have appeared in some of the RTO railcars that there are mandatory prison terms for 'assault on a public officer'. However, at the time of this research, no other offences or penalties were disseminated, neither was there communication about the authority that transit officers possess on the rail system.

#### **7.6.4. *Interpersonal communication skills***

All the 'best-practice' agencies viewed interpersonal communication skills as one of the most vital competencies that a transit police officer could develop. These skills include conflict resolution; behavioural assessment training, which builds upon an understanding the body language and traits of a person; and dealing with mentally disturbed individuals. Means (2007a, p. 33) advocates that improvements in interpersonal communication will "strengthen community relations, increase investigative effectiveness, reduce complaints and lawsuits, reduce the need for

force, and enhance officer and public safety”. The importance that ‘best-practice’ agencies place on interpersonal communication is demonstrated by the comprehensive training programs they have in place, comprising both theory and practice. The new ‘best-practice’ recruit is able to develop and thoroughly hone their communication skills in a realistic, yet safe, environment through numerous scenario training exercises where officers are able to master the practical application of skills in different types of situations. As previously documented, agencies, police academies and colleges bring in actors, youth workers or in some situations youths themselves, to provide realism to the scenario training.

Training in conflict resolution, which is central to the ‘verbal judo’ program, teaches officers how to respond to situations rather than just reacting instinctively. The MBTA refer to their program as the I.M.P.A.C.T project (**I**nterpersonal **M**anagement **P**rogram **A**nd **C**ommunication **T**raining), denoting the big difference that the acquired skills of conflict resolution can make to dealings with the public. The course includes ‘tactical communication’, human relations and problem solving for law enforcement. Means (2007b) defines ‘tactical’ in this context as the method used to achieve a specific goal. These skills provide necessary communication tools and empower officers to speak to anybody and achieve law enforcement objectives with the minimum amount of conflict (Thompson & Jenkins, 2004). This training includes strategies with a demonstrable ability to neutralise anger shown by an individual, and helps officers learn to deflect criticism. They are also taught to empathise with the individual while the officer learns how to control their own response to the situation (Kokko & Maki, 2009; Thompson & Jenkins, 2004). Most agencies base their ‘verbal judo’ or ‘conflict resolution’ training on a five-step communication model developed by Thompson (Thompson & Jenkins, 2004, pp. 167 - 174). These five steps aim to achieve a person’s voluntary compliance with the officer’s request (Thompson & Jenkins, 2004). Thompson and Jenkins (2004, p. 167) refer to the five basic tools required to achieve voluntary compliance as: “listen; empathise; ask; paraphrase; and summarise”. These are a different tool kit compared with that used by the British Transport Police who refer to their five-step model as: “simple appeal; reasoned appeal; personal appeal; final appeal; and action” (British Transport Police, 2007, p. 7). However, regardless of which model the agency uses, the purpose remains the same: to achieve compliance with the officers’ request while

“treating people with respect and dignity as the circumstances permit” (Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, 2009, p. 1).

In contrast to this in-depth communication skills-development undertaken by officers in these ‘best-practice’ agencies, I often heard the transit officers in RTO complaining that they had insufficient training in this area. This resulted in the officers feeling that they did not have adequate communication skills to deal with problem people (personal notes). As transit officer Hadyn stated, when reflecting on his training: “We need more verbal judo training for sure, because a lot of guys just don’t have any”. Many other transit officers support this view. For example, transit officer Peter explained to me:

I see a lot of new guys come out and I recognise it, it’s the same mistakes that I made when I came out, but they don’t really know how to talk to people.... I just think a lot of it sort of comes down to the way we’re trained. Because we’re not trained to talk to people.

Coupled with learning verbal communication skills, transit police officers in these proactive organisations undertake training in behavioural assessment. In these units, the officers learn to recognise and understand body language; certain behaviours and traits a person may have; and to continually observe the person’s demeanour for informative warning signs such as ‘bladed stance – clenching fists’ which is an indicator of aggression (Bay Area Rapid Transit Police Department (BART), 2009, p. 2). These highly trained officers are encouraged to go up and talk to people as a lot can be learnt about somebody by just talking to them (personal notes). This is particularly relevant when an officer may view a person who is loitering, watching what is going on. These agencies view where a member of the public is standing back and observing as a concern, particularly with the constant threat of possible terrorist activity occurring (personal notes).

The globally high achieving transit police agencies bring in mental health workers to educate officers on the best ways of communicating and dealing with people who are mentally disturbed, or who may have mental health issues (personal notes). Previous researchers, such as Brennan and Brennan (1994) with the New South Wales police, have identified that people in law enforcement roles require special skills and training to recognise and support people with a mental disability. However, the depth and breadth of communication that may be required to more

effectively deal with mentally challenged people is not covered in the RTO training. As previously documented in chapter 5, transit officers such as Patrick felt frustrated and helpless dealing with such passengers.

## **7.7 Benchmarking**

During my research, I learnt the importance that ‘best-practice’ agencies place on sharing information. This sharing includes both the giving and receiving of information with other transit police organisations as they work towards their common goal of a safe and secure environment for the travelling public. The open networking approaches displayed by these agencies facilitate their ability to benchmark and learn from each other. The original concept of benchmarking is associated with providing a reference point at a particular time, and later as a reference weight which was accepted as a particular standard (Health and Safety Executive, 1999). This concept has widened further and is now used as a business improvement tool which enables an interested organisation to evaluate its performance against other similar businesses (Health and Safety Executive, 1999). Although this tool can be used in any area of a business, it has been adopted by the organisations visited to assess their performance and improve their safety and crime management systems. Organisations can compare and contrast their performance year on year, or using another time period; and comparatively, against the performance of other like-minded organisations. These high achieving agencies learn from other organisations rather than ‘reinventing the wheel’. Benchmarking provides knowledge about how to improve processes in all areas of safety; and assists in demonstrating compliance with relevant legislation within an organisation (Health and Safety Executive, 1999).

To undertake any benchmarking exercise with another agency, it is first necessary to have an accurate picture of the statistics, systems and processes in one’s own organisation. However, as identified in the previous chapter, at the time of the statement made to the West Australian Parliament by the Hon Simon O’Brien (2009), the RTO did not have a breakdown of where incidents were occurring, or the contributing factors that lead to the events. Nor did they intend to obtain that information (West Australian Legislative Council, 2009). This precludes the possibility of any internal benchmarking exercises to identify the poorer performing rail lines, for example, so that they could learn from the better performing ones and

improve their operations. Additionally, this lack of available data prevents benchmarking and learning in a targeted way from ‘best-practice’ organisations interstate and overseas, where successful strategies have been introduced to minimise violence and antisocial behaviour on the rail system. If ‘best-practice’ processes were adopted by RTO, the potential exists to reduce the injuries of transit officers on their rail system.

The Code of Practice for Occupational Safety and Health in the Western Australian Public Service (Commission for Occupational Safety and Health, 2007b, p. 23) advocates that public service agencies should consult and collaborate with like-minded businesses and industry associations as an integral part of managing the risks in their organisation. Codes of Practice are a minimum legal standard that organisations should aim to achieve, and this particular Code of Practice includes a list of tips for organisational leaders to achieve a robust occupational safety and health system. These recommendations include “benchmarking and/or mentoring arrangements with either Western Australian or other state/territory public sector agencies with similar functions or injury risk profiles” (Commission for Occupational Safety and Health, 2007a, p. 48).

## **7.8 Summary**

Adopting the challenge of measuring safety indicators, and the incidence of accidents and injury; and comparing these internally between the different RTO rail lines, would help improve communication and information sharing; help achieve greater uniformity of practice within the organisation; and demonstrate to transit officers that their safety, alongside a reduction of crime and anti-social behaviour, is important to the organisation. As Grabowski, Ayyalasomayajula, Merrick, and Roberts argue (2007, p. 1035), “high reliability organisations clearly define what they mean by safety goals and establish safety standards against which they assess themselves”. Safety statistics, whilst very important, are just the ‘tip of the iceberg’ in terms of revolutionising safety performance. Even so, measuring safety events, enables real improvements to be made (Health and Safety Executive, 1999), and to be seen to be made. Knowing what is occurring within the organisation, and learning how it could be done better by benchmarking externally with similar organisations, would further demonstrate management’s commitment to the safety of employees and the public. The organisation’s preparedness to reduce risks through

benchmarking practices; and their ability to adapt to change and improve the organisation's image and reputation, would further demonstrate to employees that management is serious about their safety (Fernández-Muñiz, Montes-Peón, & Vázquez-Ordás, 2009). These issues are discussed further in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT DISCUSSION**

### **8. INTRODUCTION**

This qualitative research project has used a participant observation method to study transit officers in their normal work environment, capturing the meanings of organisational approaches and social interactions that contribute to the transit officers' communication and safety culture. From this experience as an insider, I was able to focus on those aspects of the organisational culture that impacted on the transit officers' attitude and behaviours relating to increasing or decreasing their risk of injury in the workplace. Referring to the role of the transit officer, The Hon. Troy Buswell, Minister for Transport, stated in Parliament:

[It] is probably the most unforgiving and misunderstood job in the public sector in Western Australia. Ultimately, these people physically place themselves between very aggressive people on a very regular basis (Western Australia Legislative Council, 2011a).

However, having this 'inside vision' of the transit officer role has enabled me to evaluate the influences that shape their safety culture; the communication processes within the security section of the organisation and the skills they acquire. These skills determine how they react and deal with the risks inherent in their job; with particular reference to transit officer/passenger interactions. Additionally, the competitive funding grant obtained for this research project, enabled me to learn from 'best-practice' law enforcement agencies worldwide, the strategies they embrace to achieve their 'best-practice' status and low injury rates.

Importantly, this research goes below the surface of the official facade of the transit officer world, to discover the hidden layers that contribute to the work culture of these officers. I found, as also indicated by Fielding (1994) Waddington (1999) and others, that what law enforcement officers are taught in training, and what they say they do, may not be what they actually do. Using an ethnographic method, this research has been able to bridge the divide between what is taught, what is reported as being done, and what actually occurs when transit officers interact with passengers on the railway system. Whilst my presence as a transit officer insider was initially treated with scepticism by some employees, this quickly gave way to an

embracing acceptance of my being ‘one of them’, by transit officers and supervisors alike. However, this reception did not extend to the management of the security area. One of the managers told me that: ‘the timing is not right, we are going through an enterprise bargaining agreement process’. He felt this could lead to the transit officers ‘bagging’ management. I did not find that this was the case; rather, officers were just keen to ensure that I saw the full range of issues that regularly confronted them. As transit officer Steve told me when I worked with him on track:

I’m surprised that they even let this happen because they like to have their spin on what goes out; whereas you’re seeing things happen, especially doing what you’re doing with all the lines. You can see exactly what it is like.

As mentioned in the literature review, ‘safety culture’ is a term which most authors subscribe to, and which many have attempted to analyse with a view to determining and strengthening the factors that constitute an effective safety culture (Cox & Cheyne, 2000; Flin, Mearns, O’Connor, & Bryden, 2000; Glendon & Stanton, 2000; Guldenmund, 2000). However, Hopkins (2002, p. 2) argues that all organisations have a safety culture, it is just that some organisations have a stronger or weaker safety culture than others. He refers to “a culture of safety” in preference to using the term ‘safety culture’. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this research, a safety culture and a culture of safety are treated interchangeably. As previously defined and documented, a safety culture is the product of individuals’ and groups’ values, attitudes and perceptions regarding what constitute safe working practices (Advisory Committee on the Safety of Nuclear Installations (ACSNI), 1993). However, as the concept of culture can be constructed as arising from shared values (Schein, 2004), the safety culture within a workplace can vary between discrete areas or work groups within the same organisation, resulting in a number of subcultures present within a particular occupational grouping (Health and Safety Laboratory, 2002; Hopkins, 2005). Thus the introduction of the X-plan in the security section of the RTO, where supervisors and transit officers are allocated to a particular line, whilst having many advantages, has also contributed to the reinforcement of differences between the lines. This, coupled with an absence of protocols for sharing information between the rail lines, has compounded the situation of multiple safety cultures and strengthened the development of a ‘silo mentality’ amongst the staff on each line. This dynamic was reflected in observations of the transit officer cadre,



with each line having developed its own cohesive subculture amongst the officers; and each line believing their line is the best; thus preventing the development of an overall uniform 'culture of safety' throughout the transit officer cadre. For instance, transit officer Peter highlighted the difference between the line cultures when he explained how the transit officers on one particular rail-line had a competition between themselves:

One line had a group of guys that were basically doing a point system, and every course of action had a set of points, an infringement had so many points, a summons had so many points, arrests had so many points, that sort of thing, and they were trying to see who could outscore each other. So guys were sort of going out looking for things to outscore one another.

However, on other lines such an attitude would not be tolerated by the more senior transit officers or supervisors.

I discovered, as previous researchers with police officers have identified including Loftus (2009), Chan (1996), Crank (2004), Van Maanen (1978a) and others, that transit officers develop and share common values, attitudes and norms as they learn to cope with the stresses and strains of their working environment.

The job carries both physical and psychological risks which can range from an assault by a passenger to dealing with the aftermath of a person who has chosen to use the rail system as a way of committing suicide, or who has been killed or seriously injured as a result of an accident. Transit officers are normally first responders for such stressful events, and develop different ways to try and cope with the trauma. Waddington (1999) refers to the workplace canteen as the 'an important space for officers to talk about stressful situations they face coping with the trauma of their jobs. His view was that the canteen enables police:

whose actions on the street are normally 'invisible', to engage in displays before their colleagues. Here officers retail versions of events that affirm their worldview: the canteen is the 'repair shop' of policing and jokes, [with] banter and anecdotes the tools (Waddington, 1999, p. 295).

Transit officers were no different, and their crib rooms serve a similar role. I noted that discussions at break times often featured a macabre sense of humour, which might appear irreverent to an outsider, but was one way through which they dealt with trauma. As transit officer Jane explained:

A young Aboriginal boy tried to jump the gate on the Eastern concourse. He ended up falling off the bridge hitting his head on the girders and ripping his head open. Half his scalp was hanging out. ... I go home from work, I don't talk about work as much and that's how I deal with things.

The transit officers do not want to discuss these stressful situations with family and friends, but feel their colleagues understand the impact such events have on them psychologically. Transit officer James explained:

They are all stressful. Every major incident is stressful. You've just got to be able to talk about it I reckon. And you can't be too stuffy about it. You've got to joke as you're dealing with it. You've got to just carry on. Hey, when you're dealing with death you've still got to make fun, be jovial while you're doing it. You can't be solemn just because of death otherwise you're not going to cope with it. You've got to be able to just joke along.

Transit officer Trevor explained how he felt following an injury:

After the first time I was injured when the person fell on me, I was a bit worried when I came back to work, cause it was group of twenty that attacked us, I went on a train and there was a similar group of Aboriginal males on the train. They weren't the offenders or anything, but it just, it brought back emotional, it brought back memories, and I was trapped on the train and I had to really, it's okay, I had to really control myself, cause I wanted to get off the train. I thought no, I didn't want to let that beat me, so I just stayed on the train and I worked through it myself.

The officers are socially isolated, partly by the nature of shift work, and partly by their law enforcement role. This isolation extends to feeling alienated from the rest of the organisation. This is made worse by a lack of recognition from the rest of the organisation regarding the difficult job they do, and by their perception that management do not visit their area to speak to 'the troops'. As one of the more senior people told me:

We are constantly battling the bureaucracy of the rest of the system to understand what we need to do the job. ... I guess if there's going to be a greater exposure of management to the floor then the organisation needs to understand that they can't load all the management practices onto us without giving us that support mechanism. We just can't do it. There's not enough hours in the day to do all the paper work requirements of a management job and to deal face to face with people on a regular basis. It can't be done. It simply can't be done.

The transit officers are fiercely loyal to other officers within their group, and as previously described, will protect or cover for other officers: they 'don't dob in a mate'. This social code is consistent with the findings of previous researchers who worked with police (Kiely & Peek, 2002; Loftus, 2009; Manning, 1997). Transit officer solidarity is reinforced by wearing a common uniform, through the use of special codes and through the shared values they have. Previous researchers working with law enforcement officers have highlighted how uniforms, codes and values help give meaning to their experiences, and sustain their self esteem (McCulloch, 2000; Paoline, et al., 2000). Transit officer Jack summed the situation up thus:

It's a good feeling coming from the guys at work; they might stir you up and have a bit of a joke but definitely the best thing about it is if something goes wrong you know they're there to back you up straight away; and that's a real mate.

An important tradition through which new recruits learn about police work is the telling of stories (Crank, et al., 1993; Paoline, et al., 2000). These 'war stories' or 'street talk' told by the more experienced officers provide an avenue for learning, socialising the new recruit into the culture (Kiely & Peek, 2002; Waddington, 1999). I learnt transit officers often expressed their views very strongly, although Waddington (1999) found that the strength of the views expressed may have no bearing on the way the police officers operate, rather it portrays their way of dealing with the difficulties that they may face on a daily basis. I found listening to these stories perpetuated established procedures, with no reference to examining whether the actions discussed had been the correct way of doing things, or whether actions complied with the organisation's goals or procedures. Warren and James (2000) refer to these 'war stories' as reinforcing cultural values in ways which translate into operational practice, irrespective of formal legal or procedural rules. As a result, I concluded that without active steps being taken to change the transit officer culture in constructive ways, the status quo would be maintained.

In the RTO, on graduating from training school, the newly graduated transit officer can be rostered as an observer anywhere on the rail system for their few days' familiarisation. Following this, the officer is rostered as a fully operational team member on their assigned line, which may not be where they undertook their familiarisation. Although the officers have a work book which lists practical

competencies to be assessed, there is no formal method for assessing whether they have mastered those competencies. However, the other organisations I visited during the research, such as Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) Transit Police, Boston; RailCorp, Sydney; and the Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority Police Service (GVTAPS); have appointed field training officers to assist their new officers in making the transition from the training school, to performing their law enforcement duties competently. These field training officers are selected on the basis of exemplary performance and a commitment to building a strong safety culture. The officers are appropriately trained with 'Train the Trainer' and 'Assessor' qualifications, which enables trainee learning opportunities to be maximised. Additionally, the field trainers have a significant impact on helping new officers develop appropriate attitudes, values and ethics, and on inducting new staff into their role in a manner which reflects the safety commitments of their training. Using this method of reinforcement, these attitudes remain with the transit officers throughout their career (Bloomington Police Department, 2001). Newly graduated officers remain on probation until they have demonstrated to the field training officer that they are competent in all their required tasks. In contrast, the old culture at RTO is maintained as new officers adopt the practices and attitudes prevalent on that line, and are denied the benefit of a one-on-one style of training and the imparting of appropriate attitudes to safety. As Chan (1996, p. 114) noted, "The transmission of this culture is not by a process of socialization and internalization of rules, but through a collection of stories and aphorisms which instruct officers on how to see the world and act in it".

The Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) in Britain, similar to the regulators of other high risk industries such as the nuclear industry and the airline industry, recognise the importance of culture in the safe operation of the rail industry and developed a safety culture inspection toolkit (Health and Safety Executive, 2005a, 2005b). Recognising the need for such a tool in Australia, The Australian Rail Industry Safety and Standards Board (RISSB) obtained a license to use the safety toolkit in Australia. The toolkit provides a consistent way of measuring safety culture in the workplace (Rail Industry Safety and Standards Board, 2010). The development of the toolkit was based on elements which had been identified by Reason (1997) as contributing to a positive safety culture. Reason (1997) refers to a

culture that is focussed on being just, flexible, learning and reporting. Combining these cultural ingredients, says Reason (1997), produces an informed culture which he believes is a safe culture. The Rail Tram and Bus Union (RTBU), which represents a large proportion of the transit officers, support this view and advocate the elements subscribed to by Reason as being the “core components of a true safety culture” (Nanva, 2011, p. 60).

The safety culture and improvement toolkit uses an easy-to-follow safety culture assessment questionnaire on the RISSB website which should be completed by a cross-section of the workforce. The website enables an organisation to analyse the results, which then link directly to guidance for general and specific improvements and examples of good practice. The questionnaire refers to key components such as leadership, the organisation’s attitude to blame, a learning culture, communication and employee involvement (Health and Safety Executive, 2005a; Rail Industry Safety and Standards Board, 2009). Whilst all rail organisations are expected to identify and implement an effective safety culture, at the time of the research the RTO had not included the transit officer cadre in such an assessment (Safety Committee Minutes, December 2007, March 2008). The RTO does not have to demonstrate the safety of the transit officers to the Rail Regulator, only the safety of the rail system.

To structure this discussion of my research findings I will address the component factors identified by the Rail Industry Safety and Standards Board (2010) as combining to produce a culture of safety within an organisation. This discussion only concerns ways in which these elements have been addressed in the transit officer security section, and does not consider how these elements have been addressed in the wider RTO organisation.

## **8.1 Leadership**

A considerable amount of literature has been published on the importance of strong leadership emanating from the very top of the organisation, cascading down through management to supervisors, to influence the development and operation of safety culture (Angiullo, 2009; Schein, 2004; Westrum, 2004). Previous research has found that different styles of management can influence the level of concern for safety shown by members in a group (Flin, 2003; Health and Safety Laboratory,

2002). As Schein (2004, pp. 246 - 247) emphasised, one of the most powerful tools a leader has with which to influence culture is “what they systematically pay attention to. This can mean anything from what they notice and comment on to what they measure, control, reward, and in other ways deal with systematically”. Consequently, if management does not demonstrate that they view safety or communication skills as important, then that is how safety and communication skills are viewed by employees. The amount of time that is devoted to learning particular skills in training also highlights the importance placed on those skills. For example, during the research period, RTO transit officer supervisors did not receive supervisory training specific to their role; neither did they have experienced mentors to follow. This lack of further training impacts upon supervisors’ performance in their role and adversely affects the respect given by transit officers to their supervisors. The officers see the supervisor as being one of them one day, and struggling to be management the next. As identified during the interviews with the transit officers, a lack of confidence can result in some supervisors resorting to ‘bullying tactics’ in an attempt to assert their authority. In contrast, supervisors who have had previous supervisory or management training, such as those recruited from the military or police force, are more likely to exude confidence and be well respected by transit officers. However, there is no opportunity for these few supervisors to mentor others. The normal procedure of ‘what happens on the line, stays on the line’, stifles the interaction and mentoring that could be achieved by an open communication and learning approach.

In the RTO there has been no specific highlighting of the importance of reducing injuries amongst transit officers. No targets or injury-reducing strategies have been developed and promulgated; transit officers are not kept informed of injuries that occur on other lines; and injury statistics in the transit officer area are not measured as a management performance indicator. Opportunities for learning from previous incidents are not taken advantage of. Transit officer injuries are dealt with at a local level, with the Chief Executive Officer and senior managers of the organisation viewing the statistics on a three-monthly basis at the Rail Safety Executive Committee Meeting. Transit officer safety representatives receive a list of transit officer lost time, and non lost time, injuries at their safety committee meetings, which on average are every three to four months. However, these statistics

are presented as a list with the accompanying graphs depicting broad categories of post incident analysis: injuries by nature, for example open wound, fracture; injuries by bodily location, for example face or head; injuries by mechanism, for example being hit by moving objects, falls on the same level; and injuries by agency, for example machinery and fixed plant or human agencies (Security Section Transperth Trains, 2009). No indication of year on year or period to period comparisons, or incident and contributing factors analysis accompany the report. In contrast to this lack of attention, issues such as ‘on-time running’ of the trains, and ‘passenger boardings’, are discussed on a weekly basis at the Executive Director’s meeting. Although there are limited forums in which action reports about injuries and incidents are addressed, one of the managers explained to me what happens in his area:

I read all the action reports daily. I go through them and I analyse what’s out there. By reading the action reports I get a good picture of what happened out there the night before and it gives me a good picture of what’s happening generally. So, if there’s any that need to be reported, like if there’s accidents or serious incidents that need to be reported to upper management, I put that in the ‘ifris’ system [computer data base for reportable incidents to the Office of Rail Safety under the *Western Australia Rail Safety Act 2010* ("Western Australia Rail Safety Act," 2010)], they review those and I put some comments in there. But generally, I view those and then they get taken by our Intel [Intelligence] people. ... Our intelligence people, what they do is they look at the action reports and they record them and they abstract them and then they take data from those and we gather statistics and information. ... We look at the data on a weekly basis and there is reports generated. [A] statistical summary is confidential stuff that ... we don’t sort of publish it.

Unfortunately I also was not allowed access to any generated statistics, but it appears that they relate mainly to infringement details which record the specifics of where passengers appear to break the rules. In terms of injury figures, I had to rely on publicly available information: either statistics obtained by the press under ‘Freedom of Information’ legislation, or Parliamentary questions documented in Hansard, to obtain any statistical information for this research. There were a number of different databases that collected information regarding the security section of RTO. These data bases were not linked, however, neither did they have the ability to talk to one another. One of the managers explained to me the reason behind the statistical confidentiality:

If we have a high amount of incidents, then we are actually deemed as 'unsafe'. Whereas, if the police have a high amount of incidents they are deemed as being 'effective'. ... What I have a problem with is just politically we are not able to use them [statistics] because the media came us and they heighten the sort of anxiety about the perception of crime on [trains]

Hopkins (2006b) identified how social demands sometimes influence organisational priorities, and argued that it was the position of safety regulators: to ensure that safety was not overlooked. However, responsibility for transit officer injuries appears to fall between two safety regulators, the Rail Safety Regulator and the Work Safe Regulator. Transit officers are classed as 'rail safety critical workers' which refers to the health standard and track work competency the employee must achieve to perform tasks critical for the safety of the rail system. One aspect of rail safety work that transit officers undertake is "work involving the management or monitoring of passenger safety on, in or at any railway" ("Western Australia Rail Safety Act," 2010, p. 15 section 17 (k)). However, the *Western Australia Occupational Health and Safety Act 1984* ("Occupational Safety and Health Act (WA)," 1984) still applies to rail safety workers under the *Western Australia Rail Safety Act 2010* ("Western Australia Rail Safety Act," 2010, p. 17 Section 10).

In comparison, peak international transit police organisations, such as the New York Transit Police Department, place considerable emphasis on minimising crime, including injury to officers, on the rail system. As part of a compstat process, managers are expected to use a weekly compstat meeting to report on the crime and injury statistics for the area under their control. The compstat paradigm is based on communication, information, accountability and results (Henry, 2003). Incidents are analysed in a meaningful way, using a simple data management system to quickly identify fluctuations and changes in incident statistics. Managers and supervisors are completely trained in investigative procedures, and are expected to have fully investigated the circumstances that led to the incident, and to determine strategies to prevent a reoccurrence. The outcomes of such investigations are shared with all areas of the organisation, and injury and lost time work statistics are benchmarked with similar organisations. The importance placed on this accountability is highlighted by each person in the chain of command, up to the Chief Executive of the organisation having responsibility for any injury occurring to a transit police officer under their supervision. These statistics become one of their performance indicators and this



enables both high and low performers to be identified and praised or motivated as necessary.

## **8.2 The Organisations' Attitude to Blame**

Reason (1997), and more recently Dekker (2007), refer to a 'just' culture as a culture where people are encouraged and trained to work safely, where clear lines are drawn between acceptable and non acceptable behaviour, and where rule breaking involving defiance, recklessness or malice will not be tolerated. It is a culture where there are systems and processes that promote the reporting of incidents and near-miss occurrences, to enable the organisation to learn from past mistakes (Dekker, 2007; Global Aviation Information Network (GAIN), 2004; Reason, 1997). Whilst a just culture acknowledges that people can make mistakes and avoids apportioning blame, it does not provide immunity for actions that were deliberate and rule-breaking. It examines all contributing factors to learn from the incident and open 'no fault' communication is encouraged and rewarded to promote completeness of data gathering (Dekker, 2007; Nanva, 2011; Reason, 1997). However, in the RTO, similar to the findings of Leith (2008) in his ethnographic research with employees at the Orco refinery, management believe that the fundamental reason for accidents that happen to transit officers is that their officers fail to follow standard work procedures and safety rules. This attitude results in RTO transit officer managers believing that injuries occur when transit officers make poor choices in the actions they take when dealing with a situation. As Jock, one of the senior people within the organisation, said in relation to the transit officers:

I would like to look at the cultural or psychological aspects surrounding law enforcement officers making conscious choices against directives, policy, procedure and training. ... In my role I continually see good officers making bad choices which effects their safety, the CCC [Corruption and Crime Commission] and people handling safety and workers' compensation ask the same pertinent question. ... As responsible managers we put directives and procedures in place to protect our people, and apply appropriate training, unfortunate[ly] officers continue to go against these provisions and make choices that jeopardise their safety.

This management belief that transit officers' failure to abide by the rules and procedures is the main cause of any injuries occurring has the capacity to cloud management thinking, preventing deep analysis of all contributing factors to the

cause of an accident/incident, and focussing instead upon rule book protocols and transit officer compliance. There was normally no investigation into contributing factors. For instance, following one particular incident, management did not evaluate whether the officer had received adequate training for the task, whether there was a breakdown in communication which led to the event occurring, or even whether the equipment the officer had was adequate for the situation which had arisen. As a consequence of this thinking, a significant incident would normally result in a global e-mail to transit officers, reinforcing a particular procedure, safety rule or law enforcement practice. Transit officers quickly learn that 'they became the problem', rather than incidents and injuries being used to identify deficiencies in the safety system. This situation was compounded by a management belief that injuries sustained by law enforcement officers are a normal by-product of their profession and the environment in which they work. As one of the managers told me:

I guess the difficulty with the job that we do is that it's an unsafe environment. No matter what you do, you can put all the secondary control measure that you like in place; unfortunately, the one element that you have no control over is the offender. ... They don't understand occupational health and safety and they don't understand the law; so they're irrational in that approach and whilst you're dealing with people like that, it's extremely difficult to put safety measures in place that can protect the officers. You're not going to be able to remove that risk.

Therefore, these combined thoughts of management, looking for fault in officers' behaviour on the one hand, and being fatalistic about injuries on the other, have resulted in an attitude that the system generally is functioning well, but that the officer has done something wrong and is 'the problem'. As a consequence, many transit officers adopt the attitude of 'cover your ass' and 'lay low'. As transit officer Eddy told me: "I am just one of the workers that keeps under the radar and [I] keep my head down". This desire among law enforcement officers to keep a low profile has been identified previously in the literature as being an officers' way of coping with their organisational environment (Auten, 1985; Manning, 1997; Paoline, et al., 2000). This thinking on the part of the officer evolves from a management style based on a paramilitary model of policing, where there is a conflicting set of expectations. On the one hand an officer works autonomously, making swift, 'on-the-spot' decisions; however on the other hand they are controlled by rigid rules, and

by actions of managers that may seem to be arbitrary, leaving officers feeling they lack support and recognition for the decisions they do take (Beck, 1999; Chan, 2004; Terrill, et al., 2003).

Any investigation carried out following a RTO incident is normally undertaken for legal purposes. Such purposes arise from: providing evidence in court against an offender; following up on a complaint against a transit officer by a member of the public; following the 'use of force' in any situation by a transit officer; or additionally, any event where management may think an officer has not acted appropriately. The criteria examined in these investigative reports look closely at what occurred in order to attribute blame, rather than examining why the situation developed and whether there were any lessons to be learnt from the event to prevent a reoccurrence. As previously documented, officers such as transit officer Fred believe double standards exist. Members of the public are innocent until proved guilty, whereas transit officers are guilty until proven innocent.

Wilpert (2008, pp. 374 - 375) argued in reference to the relationship between the regulators and the regulated:

Only under conditions of an appropriate error culture, which is characteristic of all systems actors and which searches for the genetic conditions of errors instead of the usual way of searching for a culprit, will we open up the possibility to jointly learn from mistakes and errors.

However, apart from the investigations undertaken in order to charge an offender, transit officers view all investigations referred to the internal investigation department as 'falling into a big black hole'; leaving them with a cloud hanging over their heads for months at a time until they hear the outcome of the investigation. As Transit Officer Janet told me "They'll keep us in the dark for a long time, and they probably won't even notify us". Others, such as Transit Officer Rory, believed management was out to get them:

It's their job. They're there to sack you. That's why they're there. That's what they're employed for. He says you were using excessive force. I try not to use excessive force. I've learnt now, don't push anybody, don't push them, don't check them. If they're coming at you, yes, give them a check. If they are coming at you and invading your personal space, you've got every right to check them like that (holding up an outstretched hand).

Although, as one of the more experienced officers explained to me:

The ‘internals’ [Internal Investigation Department] have obviously got a job to do and they’re not really out there to hang peoples, it’s more of a – they have to go through the motions and dot all the “i’s” and cross all the “t’s” and look right into it. I don’t know if it’s the level of complaints they get but it does take a long time. ... I had one that went eighteen months before I heard that it was all finished with.

As Wilpert (2008) notes, it is difficult to establish a ‘no fault’ culture. Unless there is a commitment to search for the causes for incidents without attributing blame, there will continue to be self-defensive cover ups and obstacles to improving safety. However, I noted in the ‘best-practice’, low-injury transit police organisations that I visited that incidents were fully investigated to prevent a reoccurrence, rather than to attribute blame. This culture of injury reduction first developed during early to mid 1990s among the New York Transit Police, resulting in a rapid improvement in the statistics when managers became accountable for crime and injuries that occurred in their district (Bratton & Knobler, 1998). The introduction of the compstat process, which is built on a management paradigm that uses statistics to assist managers achieve their organisational goals, helped to change the culture. This culture moved from an organisation being reactive, to being a proactive transit policing organisation. Managers became eager to minimise injury and crime statistics, learn from an event and share information with other managers and districts. The compstat program was transferable, compatible and replicable in other organisations and the success of the program led to the model being adopted by other transit policing organisations. The compstat approach is in stark contrast to the RTO reactive model where accountability for transit officer injuries is not defined or viewed as a necessary component of the supervisory and management system.

### **8.3 Learning Organisation**

An organisation that has a strong learning culture is characterised by the organisation’s ability and willingness to learn from their employees’ experiences and from past incidents. It captures all relevant information, analyses the data, processes information, then uses the lessons learnt to improve the organisation’s safety system (Macrae, 2009; Reason, 1997; Standards Australia, 2006a). However, in order for an organisation to capture all relevant information successfully there is a degree of required trust between people working at all levels within an organisation.

Compounding the 'trust' issue, a lack of communication has been associated with a lack of trust in organisations, leading to failed safety initiatives (Fleming & Lardner, 2001). As Conchie and Donald argue (2008, pp. 100 - 101), "In environments where safety is critical, it is important that workers feel confident that others are acting in a safe way". Nevertheless, they also believe that employees need to maintain a sense of wariness and also maintain personal responsibility for their own safety. Unfortunately, the communication barriers that are present in the RTO can contribute to an environment where trust seems arbitrary, leading to a culture within the organisation where learning is stifled. Transit officers are unwilling to report many issues for fear of being labelled as the problem, instead of feeling confident that the information will be used as part of a constructive step to improve safety. Compounding this issue, transit officers feel that management does not respect their views on safety when their initiatives from their on-ground learning are not incorporated into the workplace safety system. Issues such as purchasing a lighter torch, wearing their high visibility jackets at all times to distinguish them from the revenue protection officers, or their endeavours to purchase more appropriate gloves for use in searching an offender are not acknowledged by management. This leaves transit officers believing their views to make the work environment a safer place are not considered important by management.

A significant issue arising from the lack of incident analysis was the absence of a feedback loop to the training regime. Using a closed system in which incidents inform training would enable the discovery of weaknesses in transit officer training, which might have contributed to an incident occurring, to be dealt with and remedies incorporated into future training, to reduce the chances of a reoccurrence. In contrast to the RTO, the 'best-practice' organisations used such incidents as learning exercises. In the RTO, transit officer training is conducted by an organisation that is contracted to the RTO to deliver instruction in specific competencies that are listed in their contract. However, the arrangement only involves delivering and assessing competencies in classroom context and does not include assessing transit officer skills and behaviours in the field. Neither does it include assessing whether a change in training could improve transit officer safety. As Transit Officer Jack told me:

If the instructors got out and actually learnt what we did, and had some video evidence so that they can show the new people 'this is what can happen', the training would be improved.

Whilst the RTO has established a training committee, it did not include any employee representatives at the time of the research. During my fieldwork time at RTO I expressed an interest in attending one of the training committee meetings. However, I did not receive an invitation to attend and no minutes were available for myself or for transit officers to view the proceedings and decisions of the committee.

I found transit officers were unfamiliar with assessing the risks that may be inherent in dealing with an incident. This sometimes resulted in officers rushing in to deal with a situation instead of waiting until backup help arrived in order for a situation to be dealt with safely. As one of the more experienced transit officers told me:

You get the young ones who rush into it like a bull at a gate. I try and speak to the young first and say, "This is the way I operate. I want to have a nice safe night, yes sure we might deal with a bit of violent situations, but I want to have a nice safe night. I don't want you to get hurt and I don't want myself to get hurt. I just want to get home safely in one piece". That's why I try to explain to them, "Just take it easy. Just because you've got a uniform on, doesn't mean you're a Superman". A lot of them think they are, they think they're super men. We're impregnable, we are.

Or as another senior transit officer told me:

It's not so much going against the rules; just a real lack of judgment ... virtually no common sense you know when they are engaging. Whether you've got seven males and they're just after one, everyone intoxicated, could be charged for a bit of agro. They'll just put the blinkers on and then go in and grab that one offender right in the middle of all his friends. That sort of thing. ... Nothing seems to switch on up here [touching head]. You know, that 'this could go really wrong'.

Although the CCTV footage available to the RTO provides ample examples of such situations, which could be used for ongoing training and professional development, RTO did not take advantage of this material to instruct officers about alternative strategies that could be used to achieve safer outcomes. This wealth of CCTV footage of incidents that have occurred on the rail system and bus interchange areas could be incorporated into training packages available for access by transit officers, either through online self-paced skill development packages or in a class room mode of instruction. Both positive and negative video footage of transit officer/ passenger interactions with the public could be used as a learning tool.

Additionally, CCTV footage provides an excellent medium through which to highlight the importance of tactical positioning as regards a transit officer and an offender, and the need to assess the environment for any physical obstruction that may be present and cause a possible hazard; or alternatively which might be used as an aid. As one of the senior people who had trained many years earlier as a ‘special constable’ told me:

It’s repetitive training that has to be done with regards to things like proximity awareness. With regards to what is around you in the rail car [or] on the station that you can utilise to protect yourself. I mean, the centre pole in the middle of the doorway is one of the greatest tools I ever got taught to use to keep the distance between the baddie and myself. Just by dancing around the pole; moving around and keeping that pole between the two of us. ... It’s not taught, but there’s a lack of experience out there also

## **8.4 Communication**

A high level of communication between and within all levels of an organisation has been identified as a necessary component of any successful safety management system that seeks to minimise incidents and injuries in an organisation (Entec UK Ltd, 1999; Health and Safety Executive, 2005b). The communication pathways should always be both ‘top down’ and ‘bottom up’. As Angiullo (2009, p. 144) advocates, “Frequent open communication fosters a spirit of teamwork, encourages employee involvement in the organisation, and demonstrates acceptance of the organisation’s goals and values”.

### **8.4.1 *Manager/supervisor communication***

Open communication was missing within the security division of RTO, with transit officers not knowing what was occurring on other lines and feeling alienated from the rest of the organisation. Transit officer Eddy explained:

Anything that comes from the supervisor comes from upstairs [management] and it is something bad. We are either not doing something or something has happened and we weren’t there to do anything about it. So other than that, that is pretty much all we get from the supervisor. If we do a good job, the only people that tell you that you have done a good job is the guys that you have worked with and their colleagues.

Or as transit officer Fred said:

You get bombarded with so many crap e-mails about stuff that just means nothing to you that yeah, it would be nice to get, I suppose, a

lot of stuff to say what's going on, where the future lies, where the vision is or what's here and what's there, but you don't. And I mean, like I said, ... none of us know anything.

On some of the rail lines, musters were held at the commencement of a shift at which point, if a supervisor did have any information, they would pass it on to the transit officers. For example, this happened on the line on which transit officer Steve worked:

We've good communication because we have our musters every day and if something needs work[ing] on or we're not doing something right we have a good conference about it or we discuss it. That's where it stops. There's very little if any at all communication from supervisor up. ... The supervisors will get sent e-mails from management. Their meetings with management are every [pause], you might have one this month and one next month, and then you might go six months without any meetings. Obviously they're too busy or whatever the reasons. I think probably the biggest downfall at the moment is communication.

A few of the supervisors would also use musters to educate officers about safety issues and operational matters, however there was no consistency between the lines concerning what occurred during muster times or what information was transmitted at those musters; and no check or feedback process to ensure that important information was passed on. On some lines it depended on who the supervisor was on duty at the time as to whether a muster was held. On another line, there were no musters held at all. This appeared to be partly due to the lack of space to hold a briefing, and partly due to the need to be on the line quickly. As one of the officers explained to me:

The reason probably for it, is because in our area, we can't have muster, you've got 45,000 [exaggeration] Xyz officers [revenue protection officers] sitting in there [crib room] having theirs. So we tend to miss out on getting one. Also, you've got to add to the fact that you know they want underground stations manned as soon as possible, so once the underground day shift staff get back, you know, you pretty much OC [oleoresin capsicum or pepper spray] are rigged up and heading straight back out there.

Without the formal lines of communication, transit officers rely on the grapevine for information, and this may not always be accurate. Effective communication channels, which were evident in the 'best-practice' transit policing organisations visited, such as New York Transit Police, British Transit Police and



Massachusetts Bay Transit Police, enabled those organisations to interact purposively and cooperatively, achieving reduced injury rates for their officers and reducing crime on the transport systems. Communication between all ranks of these organisations was seen as a vital element in the safe and effective operation of law enforcement duties. Communications pathways included discussion around policies and procedures, statistics, training, hazard and incident reports and the daily musters. These communication channels could be audited, and officers at each level were responsible and accountable for information being passed on. Additionally, such communication practices help officers feel valued and part of the organisation while assisting to reduce at-risk behaviours and enhance safe work practices. Management conducted tours of rail lines during the times that transit officers were at work, and this provided an important mode of two-way communication. If this process was adopted by the RTO, management would be able to listen to transit officer problems, provide feedback on good work performed, and pass on relevant information. This would also assist in raising the morale of the transit officers. Effective two way communication is considered important in “preventing perceptions of isolation and thus the development of a separate set of behaviours or culture at the frontline” (Human Engineering, 2005, p. 11)

#### **8.4.2 *Transit officer/passenger communication***

As previously described, communication is not only important to the internal functioning of an organisation, but good communication skills are also imperative for transit officers’ interactions with the travelling public. All the transit officers that I interviewed, who had no training in ‘verbal judo’ or ‘effective communication’ skills prior to joining the RTO, felt that the transit officer verbal communication training was not sufficient for them to carry out their tasks in an optimal manner. At the time of the research, trainee officers only undertook one scenario exercise as opposed to other transit police organisations undertaking many scenarios using actors or youth workers to provide realistic situations for the trainees to deal with. Transit officer Mike summed the situation up:

You’re on a train that’s not moving, your train is not even the size of a carriage, the actors are your lecturers and they’re dressed in suits and it’s not the way it is out here. ... A lot of people come out of it [training] and go ‘whoa this isn’t what I expected, I didn’t realise it was going to be this confrontational’. They train you like you’re in customer service, not like you need to know security.

During my training, the one scenario exercise that was undertaken by each pair of RTO transit officers had to end in arrest, as this led into the next competency unit of the course, which was to develop a court brief and present evidence in a mock court case. Trainee transit officers at the time of the fieldwork had no scenario where verbal defusing skills were used to ‘talk down’ a situation. This resulted in many officers finding it difficult to develop and use these skills when confronted out on track by a person ‘going-off’ in their face. Transit officer Sam felt that the course should be redesigned to cover that situation:

If I was to have a training course you’d have the verbal judo for a week before scenario training and then try and apply the verbal judo in two weeks of scenario training. ... Maybe that extension would be what you’d expect to kind of get the habit going. It’s kind of [like] having a habit and then keeping it intact and utilised.

## **8.5 Employee Involvement**

A flexible culture is characterised by the ability of the organisation to recognise the individual skills of the employees and the ability to adapt quickly to changing demands (Reason, 1997; Standards Australia, 2006a; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001). Dekker (2011), Hopkins (2009a) both advocate a critical component of an organisation with a focus on safety, such as high reliability organisations, is the capacity to transfer decision-making to the people with the expert knowledge at a time of crisis. This view is supported by the RTBU who argue that the employees at the coal-face are the people best able to make decisions when the need arises (Nanva, 2011). In contrast to this depiction of a true safety culture, however, the RTO transit officers operate within silos, adhering to rules and keeping a low profile for fear of being classed as the cause of safety problems. Organisational features such as these, which are completely opposite to the features of a proactive, positive safety culture, have been implicated as contributing factors in many organisational disasters (Hopkins, 2005).

A flexible safety culture is matched by trust and respect being present between the hierarchical levels of an organisation, and is characterised by active employee involvement. In such organisations, management keep employees informed of what is occurring within the organisation, and listen to the views of employees, taking them into account and respecting their abilities to deal with a situation. However, transit officers complain that they do not see management; neither does management

provide them with information, or listen to their suggestions. Transit officer Archie explained to me:

I have probably spoken to him [manager] three or four times since I've been here. And I know of guards that have been here two or three years and they still don't know who he [security manager] is. I see it as, it's not real mismanagement, it's more a lack of management. They sort of leave the place to run to its own device. In one way it's good because they say 'we'll leave the guards to do their own thing, we won't over-police them'. But in another way it's like, well people don't know what's going on, especially a lot of new people who've just come into the job; they're going, 'Well who are the bosses?' They never see them.

Or as transit officer Harold told me, in a very heated way:

Show us the information. Information is knowledge and if you feel comfortable with that knowledge you can move on. And I don't think that's going to happen because we never really had that information given to us properly. That's why musters should have minutes and I want minutes to be going up to management and [they] can actually look at the minutes and go, yep we can answer that. Then send it back and then [it] can be held at the next muster, so that information is .... . The more that we can communicate, the more knowledge we have which can affect different areas, [we] will work better. And I think that's our biggest thing. They've got to treat us with a bit of respect and treat us like we're a professional unit and we can become that professional unit. At the moment they're treating us like ... . It's indecisiveness, they're not treating us like professional people.

It [information] needs to be from us the lower levels to the upper levels, so ..... they understand with what we're dealing with, you know, the issues. And if they are well informed they can actually act on it and they can send information back that will help us and put us in the right direction. If we get a good communication going, the guys will feel better about it and they will know what's happening.

Employees feel disempowered when they consider their opinions are not important to their managers. One of the biggest issues that all the transit officers complained of, and which contributed to the feeling of disempowerment, was the issue of revenue protection officers being presented to the public, by the nature of their uniform, as if they were transit officers. Whilst the revenue protection officers looked as if they were transit officers, they did not have the same powers or training that transit officers had. They also stepped back in situations where trouble arose when the public expected them to step forward. This impacted negatively upon

public perceptions of transit officers. As previously described, officers kept on raising this issue about the misrepresentations of revenue protection officers, but management dismissed this issue as being unimportant, blaming the transit officers' 'ego' as the problem (personal notes). As Transit Officer Trevor reported:

I've only heard negative reports from members of public and, saying that we're now, we don't do anything. We've run away from jobs and left them alone to be beaten up and all this type of thing. It reflects badly on us, cause they [revenue protection officers] look very similar to us. Yeah I'm not a fan of what's going on there, definitely not. They need to be separated from us. They need to look different cause they're not the same as us, and it's giving us quite negative reports from the public. ... I'm not happy with that at all.

Transit officers felt that as well as not being respected by management they were not respected by the public. A number of times when I was with transit officers I heard them referred to as 'plastic cops', or 'want-to-be cops' (personal notes). It was obvious, at these times, that members of the public were unaware of the 'powers of arrest' that transit officers possess. However, management did not seem keen to address the issue of raising the transit officer profile with regards to the revenue protection officers, and were content to know that the travelling public could not discern the difference between revenue protection officers and transit officers. In conversations with management, it was indicated that revenue protection officers received far less hassles from the public when they were dressed as if they were transit officers. The downside of this was that transit officers received far less respect as a result of public confusion over roles and the unpredictability of a law enforcement response from different officers in similar uniforms. Officers endeavoured to deal with this situation by reaffirming their own worth amongst themselves within their tight knit group on each line, and by wearing their high-visibility jackets. Frustrations over this ambiguity were usually played out in the officers' crib room.

## **8.6 Summary**

Whilst there is a considerable overlap between a number of the issues above, organisations where these elements are addressed are characterised by a strong culture of safety (Rail Industry Safety and Standards Board, 2010; Reason, 1997). A robust safety culture is one where there is strong leadership; incidents are analysed

for contributing factors, rather than to attribute blame; employees are appropriately trained; employees are informed; information is communicated through all levels of the organisation; employee opinions are valued, and silos are broken down. During the fieldwork in the transit officer section of the RTO, however many of the important components of a strong safety culture were absent.

## **CHAPTER NINE**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **9. INTRODUCTION**

This study set out to determine whether an understanding of communication and safety culture provided opportunities for improving the safety of transit officers. This ‘on the tracks’ rail system research took place each day of the researcher’s rostered workdays from 14.45 hours until the last train of the day had completed its journey. Historically, this evening/night shift is the most challenging time for anti-social behaviour on the rail system. At other times, only a skeleton transit officer presence is on duty in case an incident occurs. At the conclusion of the fieldwork, interviews took place with transit officers, supervisors and managers. The questions asked during these interviews were developed from the ‘insider’ knowledge gleaned during the fieldwork and articulated transit officer perceptions of how their work could be made safer. The competitive funding made available for this study enabled lessons to be learnt from high achieving transit policing organisations worldwide, which contributed to the development of the recommendations presented to the RTO management to improve transit officer safety.

Returning to the question posed at the beginning of this research, it is now possible to state that an understanding of communication and safety culture provides opportunities for improving the safety of transit officers.

#### **9.1 Subsidiary Research Questions**

Initially, the over-arching research question was broken down into four supplementary questions to assist the focus of the research. These four sub-questions were:

1. How are safe systems of work communicated to transit officers and is the transit officers’ understanding of safety congruent with management’s understanding of safety?
2. Does the transit officer culture have the flexibility to deal with dangerous issues as they arise?

3. Is the transit officers' safety culture a uniform culture, or are there different subsets of culture existing within the transit officer environment?
4. What is transit officer best-practice in the public transport systems at both a national and international level?

Whilst the subject matter of these questions has been addressed throughout this thesis, a brief summary of the answers to each of the components is provided below.

***9.1.1 How are safe systems of work communicated to transit officers and is the transit officers' understanding of safety congruent with management's understanding of safety?***

One of the more significant findings to emerge from this research was the discovery that there is a mismatch between the work safety culture communicated in the training environment and the safety culture that is evident 'on the tracks'. Often, safety management is viewed as a one way communication system from managers to employees, which may not be congruent with the informal system that exists amongst the workers. In the informal system (on the tracks), transit officers may adopt working methods that differ from those they were taught. These methods may not promote safe work practices, but do fit with the culture on the line, and are in keeping with the practices of their peers. Any attempt by management in which managers seek to understand the differing safety perceptions and meanings underpinning the various processes adopted by the transit officers, will be a way of interacting with the officers and promote shared understandings around transit officer safety at work.

The majority of transit officer injuries appear to occur when an alleged offender resists arrest. Often these situations are initially sparked by a small offence, with the event escalating when an offender refuses to provide their name and address to an officer, or provides a false name and address. Transit officers believe the public do not understand their 'powers of arrest', and the ability they have in real time to check the personal details of anyone travelling on the rail system against the police data base. The officers perceive this lack of public awareness of their roles and competencies as being compounded by the presence of revenue protection officers who, although dressed in a similar uniform, do not possess the legal powers that transit officers do. Transit officers believe that having these 'look-alikes' places them in an invidious position. From the public's viewpoint, officers dressed the

same should have equivalent powers, yet one day a revenue protection officer witnesses an offence and no action is taken; whereas the next day a transit officer witness a similar offence and takes action. This creates passenger misunderstanding, and can leave an offender feeling they have been wrongly and unpredictably targeted. The transit officers want the public to be able to discern revenue protection officers as being different from themselves. Transit officers also feel unsupported by management, who wish to retain the status quo, whereby the shared uniform gives the public the impression of a bigger presence of transit officers. This failure to differentiate between transit officers and revenue protection officers leaves transit officers believing their safety is compromised and their status diminished.

Another major finding to emerge from the research was transit officers' belief that they are not given sufficient training in verbal communication skills. The officers want more scenario training in this area to improve their negotiating and conciliation skills before they go on track. Transit officers argue that the one scenario training exercise provided in training had to end in an arrest, and this meant there was no experience given in resolving a situation in a win-win way. In contrast to this adversarial model, transit officers believe that if they were taught advanced communication skills they would develop more competence in handling conflict with passengers in the field; possibly enabling the resolution of a situation, rather than supporting an incident escalating to an arrest situation.

This study found that in the workforce investigated, transit officers have no formal 'use of force' framework to refer to. This can result in differing perceptions between management and transit officers on the steps they should take to deal with a situation which requires the use of force. A framework, which includes the use of communication skills, would remove some of the ambiguities and promote clearer understanding in such situations between management and officers. Transit officers would continually assess and reassess situations considering all 'use of force' options available at the time, including the option to withdraw until backup arrives. At present the officers are instructed only to take action if it is safe to do so, thus any injury that may result is seen as a failure on the part of the officer to assess the situation and follow regulations.



**9.1.2 *Does the transit officer culture have the flexibility to deal with dangerous issues as they arise?***

The evidence from this study suggests that whilst the transit officers may work autonomously, away from direct supervision by management, and at night when their managers are usually in bed, they are strictly governed in the actions they take by rules and regulations from both the rail safety, and law enforcement, jurisdictions. Transit officers are also aware of the CCTV cameras mounted around the whole rail system which can monitor their every move. Coupled with these issues and the bureaucratic and hierarchical nature of the organisation, on-the-ground decisions are normally based on compliance with regulations, rather than addressing issues around risk assessment. Transit officers very quickly learn that they can become the ‘problem’ from the managers’ perspective. This has led to a ‘lay low’ mentality, which includes ‘cover your ass’ and ‘keep under the radar’. The exception to this, and the unwritten rule amongst all the transit officers, is when one of their mates is in trouble. In these situations, they will knowingly break rules and do whatever it takes to assist a fellow officer. They all understand that next time it could be them that are in trouble, needing their fellow officers to come to their aid. A shared transit officer ‘code of silence’ (Chan, 1996, 2004; Kleinig, 2000) will surround any action taken by an officer in these circumstances.

A further result from this research is that transit officers do not feel equipped to deal with high risk, high tension situations such as the gang fights, mêlées and family feuds which sometimes occur on railway property. Transit officers wanted far more realistic scenario training exercises to deal with these situations, rather than the single arrest scenario that occurred during their three months training.

**9.1.3 *Is the transit officers’ safety culture a uniform culture, or are there different subsets of culture existing within the transit officer environment?***

The understandings gained from the encounters with the officers on each rail line, and their interviews, provide a powerful insight into the development of subcultures on the different lines. These operate in isolation from each other, and at a distance from management. The allocation of transit officers to a particular line fostered a sense of ownership for their ‘own line’ on the part of the officers, each group becoming protective of their line and believing their line was the best. Information was not shared between the various lines, and transit officers were expressly forbidden to look at any CCTV coverage of any incident that occurred on

another line. Whilst these video clips might have provided a learning opportunity for all officers, management believed that transit officers on one line would make fun of the way officers on another line handled a situation. This decision reinforced the silo mentality existing between lines and supported the development of discrete cultural groupings on each line. This perception also failed to recognise the keenness of transit officers to use on-the-job incidents to develop practical policies around fulfilling operational requirements while staying safe.

The research found there was no consistent, standardised training or mentoring for supervisory positions. As a result the experience of supervisors varied between each line. A few supervisors had previous supervisory experience in the military or police and made good use of ‘muster time’, however other supervisors had none. Lack of specific supervisor training seemed to be a significant factor in the variances in communication, safety culture and practices observed on the various lines during the study. Supervisors were not provided with guidance supporting newly qualified transit officers with further on-the-job training, nor required to assess novice transit officers’ practical competencies in the field. Newly qualified transit officers, therefore, adopted the current practices of the other officers on that line without specific guidance around best-practice safety and operational procedures.

#### ***9.1.4 What is transit officer best-practice in the public transport systems at both a national and international level?***

The major outcome of the research relating to worldwide best-practice in transit policing agencies was the common commitment to training, and the accountability required, from all levels of management and supervisory staff within those organisations. Staff were accountable for what occurred in their area of control, and were expected to know the details of all incidents as they happened, being able to report on the steps taken to prevent a reoccurrence. Statistics were kept, analysed, and publicised to focus attention on particular types of crime or crime hotspots on the rail network. Additionally, these statistics were used to benchmark the organisation’s performance against like minded rail networks so that each could learn from the other. With visibility and accountability individual performances can be praised, and further training provided for low achieving personnel. These proactive best-practice agencies took pride in their performance, and were continually seeking ways to improve.

This study of high achieving transit policing organisations found extensive use of field training officers to work with new recruits, once the officers had graduated from the academy or training school. The practice of mentoring new officers reinforced the theoretical learning from their training environment. Additionally, the use of field training officers achieved a more uniform culture of safety across all the areas and different lines within a particular network and ensured that all officers were competent in the practical components of their roles.

Best-practice transport authorities communicated the outcomes from incident investigations to all areas of their own organisation and, where relevant, shared this information with similar agencies. Findings from investigations were used to provide learning opportunities for the transit police officers, both in their initial training and in any retraining and refresher courses. These best-practice agencies used audits to evaluate and monitor the health of their safety system, with a feedback loop to trigger improvements as required. In their drive for high performance, these organisations developed expertise in strategic areas, and valued the input of personnel from inside and outside the organisation, mirroring the Peters and Waterman philosophy, ‘productivity through people’ (Peters & Waterman Jr., 2004).

## **9.2 Limitations of the Research**

When reviewing the findings of this research a number of important limitations to the study need to be considered.

- a. The most important limitation of this study lies in the fact that internally derived incident statistics were not available to assist in the research process. This, coupled with the lack of detail available about the events leading up to an incident, prevented any analysis of contributing factors, and precluded comparisons between areas and rail lines. This meant that lessons could not be learnt from previous events.
- b. The current study was unable to access relevant reports such as an internal review of safety that was undertaken during the research process, and a yearly review of the X plan which included consideration of the operational effectiveness of the five different lines.
- c. Another source of weakness in this study was the lack of access to policy and management meetings in the security area of the organisation. Such meetings

included a review of transit officer training, the corporate rail safety executive meeting, and some security and the divisional safety meetings.

Access to the above information during the research would have enhanced the findings from this qualitative study, and could have provided quantitative information that might have supported, or contradicted, the findings offered here. Further, the research suffered when the participating organisation withdrew its support after almost three years of the research.

### **9.3 Recommendations for Further Research**

It is recommended that further research is undertaken as documented below.

- a. Passenger-based research on perceptions around the role, responsibilities and powers of transit officers. This would help confirm whether transit officers' perceptions of public opinion on their role, responsibilities and legal powers are correct. It could inform education and awareness campaigns which might reduce the incidence of arrest and injury.
- b. Further research could investigate the value of advanced verbal communication and negotiation skills training, sometimes referred to as 'verbal judo'. Officers should have the opportunity to practice learnt skills in realistic scenario training. This training could be trialled initially on one line and evaluated against the other lines for its impact in reducing incidents of miscommunication and negative outcomes.
- c. It would be valuable to develop, trial and evaluate the introduction of the compstat paradigm into the security section of the RTO.
- d. The application of the 'broken window' policy to rolling stock offers a range of intriguing possibilities which could be usefully explored in further research. Using this theory, rolling stock is withdrawn from service at the first sign of damage or defacing. The rolling stock remains out of service until it is fixed. Studies overseas have shown that passengers take pride in supporting a pristine environment, crime reduces on the network and, subsequently, injury to law enforcement officers also reduces. Whilst the 'broken window' theory has been proven to work overseas, research has been

identified in an Australian context. The practice could be trialled on one line and statistics evaluated in comparison to the others.

## **9.4 Implications for Practice**

The findings of this study have a number of important implications for future practice. These research findings have been presented to the RTO management (appendix 4), for their consideration and action as they deem appropriate.

The confidentiality of accident statistics, coupled with a lack of management accountability and an absence of incident analysis of contributing factors, has resulted in there being no feedback loop into training. Incident investigation tended to focus on whether the transit officer had followed the rules, rather than offering an analysis of contributing factors which could inform the training of future transit officers and possibly prompt a change in procedure. This approach to incident investigation may, in part, have led to management and employees having different perceptions of safety. In particular, transit officers are motivated to keep themselves 'safe' from managerial criticism. However, complete analysis of incidents and the sharing of all information across the rail system would contribute to management and transit officers developing a shared understanding of safe work practices, and assist in breaking down the separate subcultures that exist on each rail line.

With regards to transit officer training, officers believe that having additional training in verbal communication skills, and practicing these skills in scenario training, would better equip them to deal with aggressive, non-complying passengers, thereby improving their safety.

This study has also highlighted the importance of appropriate training for supervisors, and the use of field training officers who have the skills required to mentor and assess the competencies of newly graduated transit officers straight from training school. Field training officers can induct novices into rail line work in a manner which reinforces the culture of safety communicated in the classroom; leading to a more uniform culture of safety throughout the transit officer cadre, and ultimately impacting in positive ways upon the everyday safety culture of the organisation and its constituent parts.

## **9.5 Summary**

In summary, open two way communication between all hierarchical levels of the security section; the training of supervisors, the introduction of field training officers, plus the sharing of information across all rail lines, would seem likely to lead to an improved culture of safety. As well as promoting uniformity of good practice across the organisation it would help break down barriers arising from an 'us and them' mentality between management and transit officers. Ultimately, transit officers would be safer, passengers would be happier, and public transport would be more a desirable option and would operate more cost effectively.

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**APPENDIX 1**  
**INFORMATION LETTER**



## INFORMATION LETTER

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

2 Bradford Street, Mount Lawley  
Western Australia 6050  
☎ 134 328  
www.ecu.edu.au  
ABN 54 361 485 361 CRICOS IPC 002796

### Research Project: Reducing Risk and Injury to Transit Officers

We have commenced a research project to provide an understanding of the everyday work and communication culture of the Western Australian Public Transport Authority transit officers, with a view to reducing risk and injuries amongst transit officers and improving occupational safety. The project is funded by an Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage Grant with Edith Cowan University and the Public Transport Authority of Western Australia.

Transit officers have commonly said in the past that anyone wanting to understand the provocation and violence they experience in their job would have to work alongside them. This research project aims to construct such an understanding of the working environment from the transit officer perspective.

The research will involve observing the transit officers at work as they undertake their normal work duties and interact with the general public, reviewing previous incidents that have occurred where a transit officer has been injured, conducting interviews with the transit officers, their supervisors and managers, obtaining an understanding of the training that transit officers undertake and reviewing what is occurring interstate and overseas.

Participation in this research project is entirely voluntary. Participation will involve undertaking a confidential one-on-one interview with the researcher for approximately an hour. The interview will be based on your work experience as a transit officer, your experiences interacting with the general public, your safety concerns about your position and any suggestions you may have for improvement. The interview will be audio recorded, and later transcribed. You may also be asked if you are prepared to have the researcher accompany you and your transit officer partner as you undertake your normal duties.

All information obtained by the researcher both in the work environment and from any interviews will be completely confidential. All information that may identify individuals will be removed and pseudonyms will be substituted for real names in all transcriptions of information obtained. All information relating to this research project will be stored securely at Edith Cowan University and remain confidential. Only the researcher and supervisor will have access to information collected. All personal information collected during this research project will be destroyed at the end of five years.

The results of this study will be used to provide a report to PTA with recommendations for any improvements identified during the research that may lead to improved communication, training and safety culture within the transit officer environment which will result in a reduction in risk and injury to transit officers. Additionally the results of this study may be published in reports, journals or conference proceedings.

If you have any questions or require any further information about the research project, please contact Christine Teague on 93706046 or via email [cteague0@student.ecu.edu.au](mailto:cteague0@student.ecu.edu.au). Christine is doing this research as part of the requirements of her PhD studies at Edith Cowan University. You can also speak to her supervisor, Professor Lelia Green at Edith Cowan University. Professor Green's contact details are:

Professor Lelia Green  
Associate Dean Research & Higher Degrees  
Faculty of Education and Arts  
Phone: 93705204  
Email: [l.green@ecu.edu.au](mailto:l.green@ecu.edu.au)

If you have any concerns or complaints about the research project and wish to talk to an independent person, you may contact:

Research Ethics Officer  
Edith Cowan University  
100 Joondalup Drive  
JOONDALUP WA 6027  
Phone: (08) 63042170  
Email: [research.ethics@ecu.edu.au](mailto:research.ethics@ecu.edu.au)

This research project has been approved by the ECU Human Research Ethics Committee.

Thank you for your consideration.

**APPENDIX 2**  
**CONSENT FORM**



\_\_\_\_\_ 2008



2 Bradford Street, Mount Lawley  
Western Australia 6050  
☎ 134 328  
[www.ecu.edu.au](http://www.ecu.edu.au)  
ABN 54 361 485 361 CRICOS IPC 00279B

## CONSENT FORM

(Please complete and return to researcher)

(Copy to remain with participant)

### Reducing Risk and Injury to Transit Officers

I \_\_\_\_\_ have read the information letter which has been given to me on \_\_\_\_\_ and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that should I have any further questions I may contact members of the research team. I agree to participate in this activity, realising I may withdraw at any time without any penalty or disadvantage to myself.

I understand that active participation in the interview process will involve the interview being audio recorded. I further understand that the audio tapes will be transcribed and all information gathered during the research project will be stored securely in a locked cabinet at Edith Cowan University for five years after the completion of the project, and then all records and tapes will be destroyed.

I understand that all information gathered during this research project will remain confidential. Pseudonyms will be used in transcribing information and I agree that the research data gathered for this study may be published provided I am not identifiable.

Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Investigator's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Appendix 3**

### **Interview Questions**

1. Can you please provide me with an overview of your background and how long you have been with the RTO?
2. Have you found the job to be what you expected? Which aspects were different to what you had anticipated?
3. How did you find the training?
4. Did you feel the training adequately equipped you to do the job?
5. What changes, in any, would you make to the training to assist with the performance of your duties?
6. What do you think of the X plan?
7. How many of the lines have you worked on? Which is your favourite line to work on and why?
8. What do you see as the differences between the lines? Have you been involved in any incidents and/or received any injuries? Can you please tell me about them?
9. What happened following the incident? What was the outcome? Was there any follow up from the event? What did you learn from the event/events?
10. How do you find the communication within your team and within the organisation?
11. How do you learn what is occurring within the organisation?
12. How do you learn what is occurring on other lines?
13. How do you learn what is occurring within your team?
14. What happens in your muster?
15. What would you do if you had an issue that you wanted to raise with management?
16. Can you think of any ways that transit officer safety could be improved?
17. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me that you feel could assist this research project?

**APPENDIX 4**  
**PUBLIC TRANSPORT AUTHORITY REPORT**

# **Final Report**

**An ethnographic investigation into the everyday work and  
communication cultures of public transport transit guards:  
reducing risk and injury**

**An ARC Linkage Project between the  
Rail Transport System  
and  
Edith Cowan University**

**Christine Teague  
Lelia Green  
David Leith  
Robyn Quin**

**June 2010**



Contents

Acknowledgements..... 1

Executive Summary..... 1

Introduction.....4

Background .....5

Findings..... 11

Recommendations..... 15

Limitations ..... 19

Timeframe.....20

Contacts.....21

References.....22

## Acknowledgements

The ECU research team is immensely grateful to the Public Transport Authority (PTA) (WA) for partly-funding this research. Many people within PTA have given generously of their time, expertise and insights and we thank them all; but especially the Transit Officer cadre who embraced the research and adopted the ethnographer, Ms Christine Teague, as if she were one of their own.

This report is written and published entirely by academic staff associated with ECU and Curtin University. The contents of this report represent the opinion of people who are not associated with the PTA.

Throughout this report reference is made to the Rail Transport System (RTS). This is because the research partner was not involved in the final stages of the preparation of this report.

Christine Teague  
Lelia Green

Edith Cowan University  
26 October 2010

## Executive Summary

The research reported below has revealed a range of opportunities through which Transit Officers' injury rates may be reduced. The recommendations we make are intended to achieve three broad outcomes which support injury reduction. They aim to: improve the interaction with members of the public; support the leadership of the Transit Officer cadre; and take advantage of lessons learnt by equivalent transit authorities in other jurisdictions. All three outcomes have been shown to reduce the number of incidents and injuries of Transit Officer-like work roles while improving the environment for public transport customers.

This three year research project has been grounded in a close engagement with the daily duties of Transit Officers and builds upon their own perceptions of how their work could be safer. It recognises that the Rail Transport System (RTS) is committed to continuously improving safety practices with a view to preventing work-related injury. Some of the recommendations that follow may already have been partly or fully addressed as a result of ongoing discussions. However, these recommendations are presented in their entirety as a way of capturing the opportunities for improved safety that were evident during the field research in 2008, and reflected in the international fact-finding visits of 2009. The recommendations resulting from this research are:

1. Field officer training and on-the-job induction.
2. 'Verbal judo' and scenario exercises.
3. Create training opportunities for continuous professional development from CCTV and other records of safety-related incidents, improving communication across the organisation.
4. Specific training for Supervisors.
5. Develop measurable Supervisor performance indicators.
6. Commence weekly Compstat meetings of Supervisors and Managers.
7. Give Transit Officers a clearly distinct uniform to reduce the ambiguity about the identity of Transit Officers.
8. Publicise Transit Officers' arrest powers to the wider community.
9. Institute a 'broken window' policy for rolling stock.
10. Continued public release of data about accidents and injuries to Transit Officers.
11. Conduct an awareness campaign within RTS on the Transit Officer role.
12. Introduce a 'Transit Officer of the month' award.
13. Benchmark with other public transport authorities, national and international.
14. Review the current effectiveness of OC (Oleoresin Capsicum) spray and determine whether a suitable alternative is available.
15. Implement a formal 'use of force' framework.
16. Further research.

Changes to Transit Officer training to include additional instruction in how to defuse situations through conciliatory talk, using effective scenario enactments and role playing that



result in a win-win defusing of the situations under consideration. Such a revised training schedule could be underlined by a post-training induction period of some months where new recruits work with established and experienced Officers, who are appropriately trained as Field Training Officers. The aim is to induct new Transit Officers into best practice behaviours in the daily conduct of their duties, rather than have them experience a mismatch between safety as it is taught in training, and safety as it is practised on the lines, as can sometimes happen. Transit Officer Supervisors also require training and induction specific to their role, and this will also improve vertical communication between Managers and Transit Officers.

Across the organisation there is the potential to improve safety and injury-reduction awareness by working to reduce anti-social behaviour occurring on the rail system. Breaking down communication blocks between line staff and management and sharing information between the lines will aid the process. Overseas Transit Policing organisations use the Compstat process which is based on communication, information, accountability and results. Strategies are suggested in this report for ensuring that what happens on the line, good and bad, is available to others to learn from. In this way safe and injury-preventing behaviours can be practised and advanced across the organisation.

In terms of relationships with the travelling public three key initiatives are offered. The establishment of the role of the Transit Office as unique and unambiguous through changing the Revenue Protection Officer uniform to be readily distinguishable from that of Transit Officers. An augmented public information campaign that tells passengers about the role, responsibilities and powers of the Transit Officer so that there is less ambiguity about when and whether the Transit Officer is likely to effect an arrest. A proactive commitment to the highest standards of maintenance of rolling stock since this has been associated elsewhere with improved passenger behaviour.

The wider community has a stake in the safe working environment of Transit Officers. This shared responsibility would be made more evident, and enhanced, by the public release of injury data. Globally, a number of organisations have people working in roles analogous to those of the RTS Transit Officer. In these organisations, low and reducing injury rates are associated with active benchmarking and proactive exchange of useful information in both the local and global context.

Strategies are provided in this report to improve the Transit Officer profile within the organisation and in turn improve Transit Officer morale and breakdown the 'us and them' perception held by the Transit Officers. Some concerns have been expressed about whether the current reliance upon OC spray means that the Transit Officers have access to the best available set of deterrents. The implementation of a formal 'use of force model' would help ensure that the deterrents available were employed using the appropriate response for the risk involved.

## Introduction

This report is a deliverable as part of a study co-funded by the Australian Research Council (\$103,000) and the Rail Transport System (\$20,000) over the period 2006-2010, including a one-year extension. Its purpose is to make recommendations for:

- (i) a short-term project to be funded by a \$20,000 grant from the ARC (channelled through ECU) to trial a means of reducing workplace injuries among Transit Officers;
- (ii) long-term organisational responses to the injury rate experienced by Transit Officers.

Quoting from the grant proposal, written at the time when Transit Officers were known as Transit Guards, the report's aim is to investigate:

the work culture of public transport Transit Officers to understand better the dynamics of passenger interaction with a view to improving safety. The significance lies in the unacceptable number of injuries sustained as a result of attacks upon guards. The health and safety of transport guards and the travelling public has implications for public transport costs, its attractiveness as a transit option and the security enjoyed by passengers. Improving the experience of public transport has flow-on environmental and economic benefits. The project will feed into improved training for transit guards and positive culture and communication changes. A key outcome will be a reduction in injury rates (ARC 2005, p. 2).

The chief research methods through which this detailed, longitudinal project was realised were ethnographic fieldwork, interviews and reviews of best practice through visits to national and international leaders in public transport safety.

The researcher/ethnographer, Ms Christine Teague, took part in a 12-week Transit Officers training course, a one month observation of the tracks in the CCTV monitoring room and four months' Transit Officer shift work rostered on duty alongside working Transit Officers. The fieldwork interstate and internationally accounted for an additional two months of work, and the study has thus involved some 10 months of on the ground duties in addition to literature and publication reviews, data analysis and writing up.

The recommendations offered arise from a combination of these sources of information and experience but are especially grounded in the work alongside the Transit Officers and the opinions shared by them in the confidential in-depth interviews. As required by the ECU ethics committee, and as guaranteed to interviewees, pseudonyms are used in all quotations to protect the anonymity of the Transit Officers involved.

## Background

Transit Officers work in a challenging and sometimes arduous environment, and are often faced by members of the public whose behaviour may be affected by alcohol or other drugs. In the course of Transit Officer duties, as Fred describes:

You're not dealing with rational people, you're not dealing with 'people', most of the people you're dealing with are either drunk or under the influence of drugs, so they're not rational, they don't hear you, they don't understand what you're saying, they just have no sense of what's right or wrong, you know? Especially being under the influence, so I mean, you can talk till you're blue in the face with somebody who's drunk or on drugs, I mean, all you have to say is one thing. 'Oh, can I see your ticket please', 'oh, why do I need a fucking ticket', you know? They just don't get simple everyday messages.

Transit Officers may find themselves at risk of physical and psychological injury. As Jo recounts:

Within the first week of coming out of course I got smacked on the side of the head, but this lady had actually been certified, like, she was nuts. She was completely mental and we were just standing on the train talking and I've turned around to say something to my partner and she was fine, she was as calm as, and I turned around and talked to my partner and the next thing I know I ended up with her fist to the side of my head. And I went 'what the hell was that'? And she went off, she went absolutely ballistic. I ended up arresting her because it was assault on an officer whether she was mental or not so I ended up arresting her.

Peter talks about the psychological effects of the job

When someone decides to take the coward's way out and sit in front of the train, we're the first ones there, we have to identify first of all if the person is deceased. Nine times out of ten, there's a guarantee, but you still need to make that initial, even though it's not a, it's a call that an ambulance officer has to make, but like I say, yeah, tell those ambos to hit the skids because this guy's still breathing sort of thing. We have to ensure that the driver's alright, ensure the passengers are alright and we have to stand over what's left of the remains

John also commented on the psychological effects of the job

It's not just probably the physical side of maybe getting punched in the face or whatever else, it's that ongoing, I've just seen a person who's been spread over 150 metres by a 100 ton train, How am I going to go home and tell my wife what sort of day I've had?

One of the Supervisors crystallised the situation by saying:

We give you the basics to keep yourself safe but there will always [...] I mean you're dealing with the public and individuals who are iced up or intoxicated or whatever else who are unpredictable to start with. So it's not like using a piece of machinery where you can put actual protective safe guards in place and a list of rules right next to it and instructions how to press the on button and the off button, it's constantly evolving.

Transit Officers share a range of functions with Police Officers but also experience a number of disadvantages compared with Police. These can be summarised as including:

- (i) Transit Officers are required to deal with trouble face-to-face, as it arises. There is generally no 'cooling off' time between a summons for help and the Transit Officer arriving. Steve summed the situation up by saying:

Out here you're out of the training, into the fire, you're dealing with it and you do it every day, face to face contact, arresting, rolling on the ground, doing the whole lot. A copper wouldn't even speak to as many people in his first 12 months as what we do in our first three. Plus not only that, with us something happens we're there on the spot, we're dealing with it in the heat of the moment and it's full on face to face, get down and dirty with the baddies. Whereas out in the street something happens, someone rings the coppers, by the time they get there it's either defused or the baddies have gone away, there's not that instant [contact].

- (ii) Transit Officers have powers of arrest and are protected by new mandatory assault legislation but they are not provided with stun guns (tasers) for self protection, and for use when there are a number of people involved.
- (iii) Transit Officers' jurisdiction is limited geographically, in relation to the railway reserve, and this can give some potential offenders the impression that if they can 'break away' they will be able to evade consequences.

There is also confusion in the minds of the public about Transit Officer responsibilities when people are involved in an affray, or when someone may be victim of an assault on property adjacent to railway property, and Transit Officers do not intervene.

- (iv) Transit Officers' powers of arrest, and their access to the police mainframe computer database via a shift commander, are imperfectly understood by the travelling public. This means that Transit Officers are treated differently from Police, potentially giving rise to fraught circumstances. For example, a young person might give a false name and address, not realising that the Transit Officer can check this on the spot through radio communication with the CCTV monitoring room. This can lead to a situation where a potential infringement notice may suddenly become a situation requiring a mandatory arrest (since this is the necessary response to the providing of false identity details). Since most injuries to Transit Officers occur as a result of resisting arrest, and since an arrest in these circumstances may be totally unexpected by the perpetrator, these are the kinds of circumstances which may get quickly out of hand. As Jo states:

The problem [is] the fact that people don't know where we're coming from, they don't know what kind of job we're doing. I'm not necessarily saying treat us like police but at least the police have a certain amount of respect and people know that if you do something wrong in front of a police officer you're going to get into trouble. They don't care if they do it in front of us. I think that's the biggest issue.

- (v) Transit Officers' training is less extensive than that of Police Officers and is particularly light in terms of training in how to use verbal skills to defuse or scale down confrontations. Although there is a training scenario which leads on to a mock court case, there are few opportunities during training to practice 'talking down' a situation to reach a compromise resolution. Half a day in the twelve week Transit Officers' training course was devoted to 'conflict resolution strategies' and this is much less than is on offer to Police Officer trainees. For example, the minimum time spent on verbal judo skills in the transit police agencies visited during the research was two days. This formal training in conflict resolution was accompanied by many scenario training periods where the 'verbal judo' skills learnt, were practised. As Mike stated:

Verbal judo comes in very handy for me and that's from what I learnt from the police not from what I learnt here, because it teaches you not to just get straight hands on, like wrestling someone to the ground. Try and talk them out of a situation.

Transit Officers do not project the same level of deterrence towards offenders as Police Officers, for various reasons which include the above points. This places them at a higher risk of injury because they must confront situations which the Police may be able to diffuse as a result of perceptions of their role and status. Apart from struggling on occasions with the responsibilities of Police Officers, without their powers, other operational considerations also impact upon Transit Officer effectiveness and confidence.

- (vi) The comparatively new system of allocating Transit Officers to a 'line' under the X-plan has many advantages. Those perceived by the Transit Officers include: camaraderie; the opportunity to get to know regular passengers; an environmental safety awareness of the station surrounds, and an awareness of the characteristic features of different stations at different times of the day and night. One disadvantage, however, is that 'what goes on on a line, stays on a line'. The opportunity to learn from events on other lines is consequently reduced.
- (vii) Transit Officers are not highly visible to members of the public in the sense that their uniforms are generally very similar to those of Revenue Protection Officers who lack the physical skills training, visual presence, communication skills, and other training and responsibilities of Transit Officers. Given that the Transit Officer has a range of responsibilities which require that Officer to take action in specific circumstances, the actions taken can be unexpected when members of the public fail to differentiate between the different roles and responsibilities of Transit Officers and Revenue Protection Officers and expect Transit Officers to behave as Revenue Protection Officers do.

This situation also has a reverse effect when a Revenue Protection Officer does not assist in a situation, leaving members of the public wondering why a Transit Officer has not provided assistance or dealt appropriately with a public order event. These circumstances leave Transit Officers feeling maligned and some consider their professionalism is being compromised. The Transit Officers are of the opinion that the general public view both the Transit Officers and Revenue Protection Officers in the same way since the uniforms are very similar. As Angus states, in terms which echo views expressed by other Transit Officers (and it should be noted here that The Contractor X currently has the contract for providing Revenue Protection Officers):

I've spoken to quite a few members of public and received complaints from them about Transit Officers and talking more about the incident have found out that it was actually Contractor X Officers [Revenue Protection Officers] that are dealing with it. So it's creating a bad image for us. It's not Contractor X, it's not Revenue, it's Transits that are copping all the flak for it. [...] It is dangerous for us and it's a lot of bad publicity for us. It's hard enough, the job that we do and the lack of respect that we do get from people, we don't need other people adding to it and making it harder.

Or, as Sam felt:

It is embarrassing for them to have a very similar uniform and deal with the public and then [we] deal with the public ourselves. [...] And their ability to infringe is, yeah they'll just infringe anyone without considering further to that. You know, there's many reasons why people may not have a ticket. [...] It's like a second rate kind of fix to the problem for lack of Transit Officers. But I do feel embarrassed to be wearing a uniform very similar to theirs. Nothing against any of them, it's just the way I think it's been approached by either Contractor X Security or Rail Transport System. I think it's dangerous. And I do consider that a lot of complaints that are founded may come from Rev. Protection. It's nothing against them, they're doing the job.

Transit Officers such as Peter also view the situation where Transit Officers are easily confused with Revenue Protection Officers as raising safety issues:

An incident happened in the city and Transit Officers went to it and they could not distinguish on video who was transit and who was Contractor X, so they had no idea who was who, which is a major concern. Another incident where an officer has called for backup on a train and the guys have got off and just stood there, and he didn't realise that they are actually Contractor X officers, so he effectively had no backup, he thought he did but he didn't.

- (viii) Some activities carried out by Transit Officers involve actions for which they receive no training and which might appear to be beyond the areas in which they have authority

to act: for example, the serving of summonses to members of the public at their home address. As Wayne said:

There's no real instructions, the only instructions initially when I did the first one was you do a cell call to base and let them know you're going to a private address, and then when you've left that address you do another cell call and let them know you've left the private address. [...] There's no instructions that I've been given apart from 'do a cell call before and after' and that's just been from a Supervisor, it's not written anywhere or sent to me in an email or wasn't in any training. Actually it probably was just given to me by a more experienced officer when I went to do a summons. [...] The safety implications are amazing because you deliver a summons and someone's not happy about it and they can kill you, like, you don't know what can happen. But yeah, there's no time limit on the cell calls as far as I'm aware; that if we don't call back they'll get back to you. They just note it down and they just carry on with their job watching the cameras.

- (ix) Supervisory training and Supervisory leadership were noted as being deficient. A couple of the Supervisors had commenced the Certificate IV 'Front Line Management Course' held at the Australian Institute of Management, however the course is a generalised course and not specific to the tasks that the Transit Officer Supervisors undertake. The majority of the Supervisors had not had any opportunity to undertake further training to equip themselves for the positions they hold. This was not the case in any of the other transit police agencies visited during the research. In all other cases, Transit Officer Supervisors received training specific to their role.

As one of the Supervisors said: "I've mentioned it at meetings as well, but no-one seems to really sort of care too much about it. [...] They give you an acting stint and you're straight in there". Another Supervisor felt that the Transit Officer management were trying to get further training for them and would support the suggestion, but that a move to more training would be blocked by management higher up. "Unfortunately it would go to [name withheld], [that person] would push it up further and say, 'look we would like to get our people onto this', and it would be, 'nup they don't need it'".

Without acquiring any additional skills it is difficult for a Supervisor to be working as one of the Transit Officer corps one day, and in a Supervisory position the next. As Jo stated: "he was just a Transit Officer, so we used to muck around and get up to virtually all sorts of mischief. Now he has to elevate himself above that and I know he's finding it hard to be able to separate". A few of the Supervisors take pride in maintaining a good team spirit with the Transit Officers on their line, and use the muster time to pass on any information they have and answer any Transit Officer questions. These Supervisors also use the muster at quieter times, such as Sunday afternoons, to educate their team members. Such strategies help overcome vertical communication barriers. However, these practices are not replicated in all areas.

In the Transit Police organisations visited, muster time would be used to brief officers as to what has been happening on all the lines, to pass on any pertinent organisational

information, to alert as to any 'look outs' to be kept for persons of interest, and to instruct in any learning from incidents to be shared. One of the elements of a positive safety culture is to keep people informed of what is going on in their organisation and to learn from incidents that have occurred (R. L. Helmreich, 1998; Reason, 1997; Standards Australia, 2006). Transit Officers's' believed that most of the Supervisors told them what they knew, but there was an information block between management and the Supervisors. Simon explained:

There is a brick wall between the management and the officers, and not so much the Supervisors, because I know that Supervisors and the senior officers get continuous emails from the managers [normally relating to train running], and that's not in regards to what's going on with the unit and all the rest of it. And yet the guys don't get anything unless it seems to be a negative thing. Other than that, it just seems like you know, there's this brick wall. ... I think if there was more open communication between the managers and the guys, I think the place would be a bit more harmonious in how the troops see their higher ups.

In overseas Transit Police organisations visited, Supervisors were part of a Compstat process. The Compstat paradigm is based on communication, information, accountability and results. Incidents are analysed in a meaningful way, using a simple data management system to quickly identify fluctuations and changes in incident statistics. This enables a rapid assessment of the effectiveness of decisions and strategies taken on each line. As Henry (2003) states "The number and type of performance indicators in the data base and in the report should be determined by the specific needs of the individual agency". Supervisors and Managers are accountable for the results which are discussed at the Weekly meetings. Both high and low performers can be identified and praised or motivated as necessary.

This range of circumstances relating to the public expectations of Transit Officers, and the organisation's expectations, indicates that the role of the Transit Officer occupies a challenging space in a challenging environment. Potential ambiguities in the role, and in public recognition of the responsibilities, powers and restrictions applicable to Transit Officers can lead to misunderstandings and unnecessary friction. In fraught circumstances such matters can escalate, leading to conflict and potential injuries.



## Findings

The research indicates that:

Transit Officers would welcome a public information campaign which clearly indicates the nature of their role, their powers and their responsibilities. As part of this communications initiative:

- (i) Transit Officer uniforms should be more clearly differentiated from those of other categories of RTS staff
- (ii) Transit Officers' powers of arrest and their ability to verify any personal details given should be actively highlighted

Transit Officers seek more training in skills and strategies which can be used to defuse a tense situation. Such training might be conveniently referred to as 'Verbal judo', though this should not necessarily be taken to mean the copyrighted training course of that name.

Transit Officers seek more scenario training. To make the scenarios more realistic the organisation should consider the employment of actors, or youth workers and social workers who are familiar with the type of behaviours with which Transit Officers are routinely faced.

Like with most workplaces, there is a mismatch between the work culture communicated in the training environment and that which operates 'on the tracks'. The informal work culture (on the tracks) can occasionally give rise to practices and attitudes which may not promote a safe work environment. This can range from the way to approach and talk to a person, to the use of force options, to developing spatial awareness. One way to help promote a safer work environment and work towards a safer Transit Officer culture is to institute a Field Training Officer system, as operated in the leading low-injury organisations involved with this research. These Field Training Officers would complete 'train the trainer' and 'assessor' courses.

A Field Training Officer would be buddied up with a new recruit and would be responsible for providing a mentoring role to the new Transit Officer; assessing the competencies of the officer in the field. New graduate officers from the training school would remain on probation until they had been assessed as competent in all practical areas by the Field Training Officer. The Field Training Officers would be chosen from those officers whose work practices are exemplary and whose track records demonstrate a range of skills and experience while always maintaining professional standards of conduct and effectiveness in the role. This practice is consistent with interstate and overseas organisations that demonstrate low injury rates. The minimum time this Field Training process took in the organisations visited during the research was three months. The majority of Field Training regimes ranged between four and six months long.

Internationally, comparatively lower and actively reducing rates of injury are correlated with publication of those injury rates. Making injury rates public helps persuade all parties concerned that reducing injury is a key objective for the organisation. An open approach to investigating accidents and crises characterises (particularly) the airline industry and public medicine because it is accepted that the duty to understand causation of harm, prevent reoccurrence, and maximise the incidence of positive behaviour is more important than a

short term desire to reduce potential embarrassment. (See for example Gawande's (2007, p. 209 - 227) analysis of the impact of publicising the life expectancy of Cystic Fibrosis sufferers, associated with treatment by different clinics in the US.) Additionally, see Helmreich and Merritt (1998) in reference to both the airline industry and the medical profession.

Material supporting this recommendation also supports benchmarking across operators and jurisdictions. Accepting that the RTS situation is unlike many others and is not directly comparable with any other authority, it is nonetheless possible to share with other equivalent organisations the overall desire to reduce injury rates, and to do this in a collegial and supportive exchange with like-minded industry players. The comparative national and international research has established a range of potential partners for such an enterprise with which the RTS might liaise.

Internationally, key public transport authorities such as that in New York - have had considerable success with a 'zero tolerance' policy related to the travelling public's transport environment. This is commonly referred to as 'the broken window' theory and refer to when a train is withdrawn from service if it is damaged or defaced (Kelling & Coles, 1996; Maple & Mitchell, 1999):

The 'Broken Windows' theory suggests that there is both a high correlation and a causal link between community disorder and more serious crime: when community disorder is permitted to flourish or when disorderly conditions or problems are left untended, they actually cause more serious crime. 'Broken windows' are a metaphor for community disorder which, as Wilson and Kelling (1982) use the term, includes the violation of informal social norms for public behaviour as well as quality of life offenses such as littering, graffiti, playing loud radios, aggressive panhandling, and vandalism. (Henry, 2003, p. 117)

All American transit police agencies visited subscribed to this theory. It was interesting to note that all of the transit police that the field researcher spoke to were knowledgeable on the theory and keen to pass the information on. Putting this theory into practice has a positive effect in the transport environment. In New York, for example, no train is allowed in service with a scratch on the window. This policy helps develop a culture where the public are motivated to value the physical environment of the train and, consequently, value more greatly the work of the Transit Officer.

Internationally transit police agencies subscribed to the Compstat paradigm. Using this theory, Supervisors, Managers and Executives are accountable for what occurs in their area of control. The Compstat process involves the collection of data that is important to manage the agency and achieve the desired goals of the organisation, the analysis of statistics; the identification of any new patterns or trends emerging and presenting and sharing the information in a simple format.

Transit Officers are aware of the importance of the CCTV cameras in terms of recording the actions of themselves and members of the public. They are generally positive about this surveillance, seeing it as a protection for themselves. As Hugh, one of the experienced Transit Officers explained, talking about when he was directing a person to leave the station: "I make sure my hands are always open like this (*showing outstretched palms*) and always

making sure I'm giving directions. It's all on camera. Direction, direction, direction. Don't push; don't push, because if you push, that's technically assault".

Such findings are in line with expectations from the literature. For example, Goold's ethnographic work with Police Officers revealed one officer's views on the matter:

It affects our thinking of things a lot because obviously the cameras are there to identify possible crime about to happen, or even people who are actually committing crimes at the time. But having said that, it also records police actions. Therefore when you arrive at an incident, you've got to be aware of the fact that the cameras are watching you. We are being recorded, the same as anybody else. Therefore what we do has to be right, it has to look right. Therefore it makes it quite a priority for most officers entering the town centre – they're thinking, 'I'm on camera' (Goold, 2004, p. 194).

Using CCTV footage, there is an opportunity to create opportunities to learn actively from safety-related events on all lines, thereby negating one of the few disadvantages of the X-plan. Training packages could be created which involve, for example, evidence prepared for court cases. These could be used to suggest a range of possible and beneficial responses to specific challenges in the line of duty that may have resulted in injury. Such training modules could be offered for Transit Officers to access securely in work time on work computers, designed with self-paced learning in mind, allowing for what happens on one line to inform best practice on all lines. The important concept is: "that organisations and their members use the information to improve safety and act on the lessons derived" (Standards Australia, 2006).

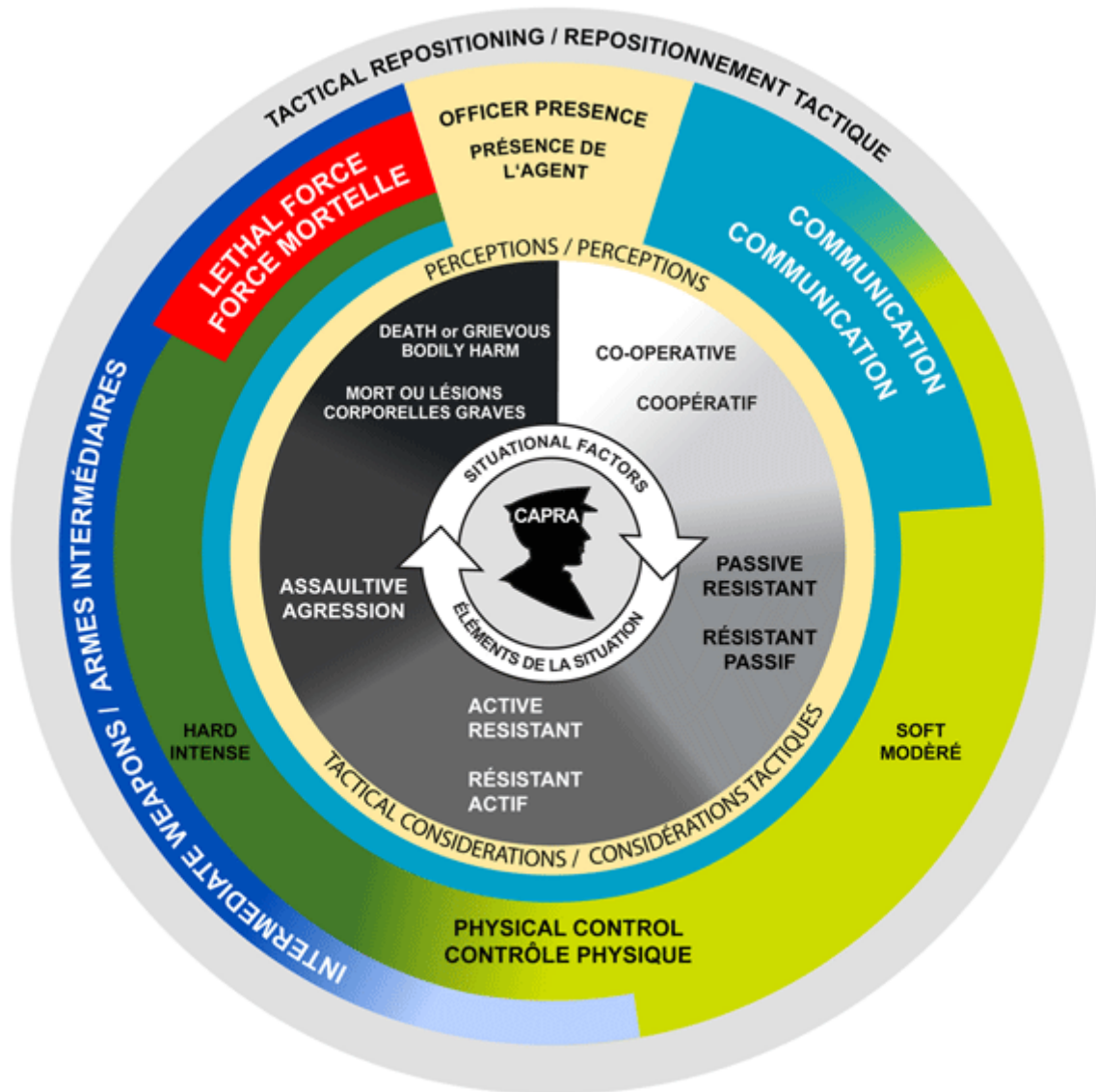
Transit Officers are now more reluctant to use Oleoresin Capsicum (OC) spray as a use of force option. At one stage the spray was withdrawn for a number of weeks due to a flammability issue, and the Officers believe that the new batch is not as effective. As David said

The initial stuff was outstanding; the new stuff is sometimes hit and miss. Because it's got a little more water based in it now, the stream sometimes doesn't come out as a stream. It will go left, right and centre. It takes a lot longer to have an effect on the bad guys that have been sprayed. Whilst the original stuff, with an initial spray, they'd be down within 10 or 15 seconds. This new stuff may take up to 30-40 seconds for someone to start having the effects.

Transit Officers are not familiar with the use of force continuum which is taught and practised in all other transit police agencies visited during the research. Using this framework the officer is able to continuously assess the situation and select the most reasonable option relative to the circumstances as perceived by them at that point in time (Ontario Police College, 2000). Research has shown that choosing the appropriate 'use of force' option is not a linear process.

Traditionally, 'use of force' frameworks were based on a step by step incrementation and de-escalation process in response to the level of aggression perceived in the disruptive or dangerous person. However, law enforcement agencies now realise that linear models have failed to accurately reflect the dynamic nature of potentially violent situations (Hoffman,

Lawrence, & Brown, 2004). Variations of the Ontario 'Use of Force' model are in use in other agencies. In these models the Officer is taught to consider all options, continually assessing the risk and appropriate response, considering all use of force options available including the option to withdraw from the situation (Australasian Centre for Policing Research, 2004)



**National Use of Force Framework  
Royal Canadian Mounted Police (Zanin, 2009)  
Ontario Use of Force Model**

## Recommendations

### **1. *Field Officer training and on-the-job induction***

This is the recommendation judged likely to have the quickest return on investment. It involves identifying Transit Officers with exemplary low-injury safety records and positive performance of their duties and relationships with the public. This cadre should embody the most desirable aspects of Transit Officer safety culture and it should be a compliment among officers to be identified as such. The status need not be recognised with money, but could be indicated with an additional badge or emblem. These Field Officers are charged with working with newly trained Transit Officers to induct them into the role in a manner which complements and reinforces the safety culture communicated in the training programme, and which does not undermine it. The Field Officers should undertake courses in 'Train the Trainer' and 'Assessor' qualifications which will enable them to assess when the probationary Transit Officers are competent in the 'field'. It is recommended that trainee Transit Officers remain on probation until deemed competent in all areas of their role by Field Training Officers.

### **2. *'Verbal judo' and scenario exercises***

A number of Officers have commented that very little of their training concentrated on working through and role-playing high-tension scenarios. Instead, most scenarios were about how best to act in the lead up to what might eventuate in an arrest and a court case. Arguably, every arrest and court case is a failure of an opportunity to resolve an incident in a positive way. So there is the potential to realign the training and the communication culture to improve the likelihood of a positive resolution to negative exchanges. This desirable outcome can be promoted by paying greater attention to conciliation skills and win-win scenario training to resolve potential conflict with words alone.

### **3. *Create training opportunities for continuous professional development from CCTV and other records of safety-related incidents, improving communication across the organisation***

A range of materials exist which can demonstrate the escalation of interactions that end negatively, in either or both of injury and arrest, and which can be used to instruct the wider Transit Officer cadre. Transit Officers have access to computers in their work time as part of their duties. It is possible and desirable to identify key episodes and incidents that have whole of service relevance. Using materials such as CCTV footage as components of online, self-paced training packages, securely accessed through workplace computers and servers, the organisation can overcome the one major disadvantage of the X-plan: the fact that what occurs on on a line, stays on a line. Using evidence of key activities, good and bad, the RTS can institute on-the-job training and professional development to reinforce a positive safety culture where each line learns from all the others.

### **4. *Training for Transit Officer supervisors***

Whereas the proposed training packages will help overcome the communication barriers that negatively impact the chance of an active safety culture spreading across the organisation, including between and across the different lines, supervisor training

will help improve vertical communication in the organisation. Supervisor training should be relevant to the specific responsibilities of the position. At present, some Supervisors adopt inconsistent and sometimes ineffective approaches to communicating and leading their teams and few use the muster as a means of reinforcing safety messages or providing a conduit for two way communication up and down the organisation.

**5. *Measurable Supervisor performance indicators***

It is recommended that the RTS provide a proactive strategic direction for Supervisors with accountability for their line. Following the specific Supervisor training, instigate measurable Supervisor performance indicators

**6. *Regular (weekly) meetings of Supervisors and managers***

The present patrolling arrangement makes it easy for people committing crime or anti-social behaviour to move from one line to another. Regular (weekly) discussion and information sharing between Supervisors about incidents occurring on the lines can improve the ability to deal pro-actively with situations rather than reactively. These meetings should include incidents that have occurred, investigations that have been undertaken and learnings that have arisen from the analysis of the incidents. At present a tendency to 'silo' thinking means information is not shared. These regular meetings would have a triple effect; reducing crime and anti-social behaviour on the lines, making Supervisors more accountable for their line and assistance in providing support to reduce the line isolation felt by Supervisors.

**7. *A clearly distinct uniform for Transit Officers***

Transit Officers occupy a role with a range of ambiguities. In many ways, they are like Police Officers, but they are not Police Officers. In some circumstances, they can act like Police Officers: but the situation changes with where they are standing and where the questionable behaviour is occurring. These spatial delineators of what is and is not railway property are unclear to the public. Given this currently unavoidable ambiguity, it is not helpful if the Transit Officer role can be easily mistaken for other roles with far fewer powers and responsibilities such as that of a Revenue Protection Officers and or the Customer Service Officers. This ambiguity can be addressed. It is entirely appropriate to provide a unique identifier to the Transit Officer so that the public is more aware of their role and responsibilities.

**8. *Publicity of arrest powers to the wider community***

Many Transit Officer injuries occur when passengers resist arrest. The evidence indicates that, in some of these cases, resisting the arrest is linked with a misunderstanding of Transit Officer powers, in terms of both the power to arrest and access to the Police records which enable checking, for example, of names and addresses alongside relevant descriptions. If young people were aware of these powers they might be less likely to give false or misleading names and addresses and thus less likely to find themselves subject to an unexpected arrest when they had not previously been behaving in an aggressive or disruptive way. A targeted publicity campaign, along the lines of the successful RTS campaign to communicate the importance of the Student Concession Card, could significantly reduce the incidence of such 'surprise' arrests, and the consequent and escalating incidence of resisting arrest.

**9. *A 'broken window' policy for rolling stock***

Public transport authorities with some of the lowest recorded injury rates, and some of the fastest dropping injury rates, also have a range of other policies in place to underline pride in the public transport system and the consequences of anti-social behaviour. Among these policies but worthy of particular attention is that of the 'broken window' approach. Under this strategy rolling stock is withdrawn from service at the first sign of damage or defacing. The impact of this action appears to be that passengers take greater pride in supporting and maintaining a pristine environment which has added benefits in terms of travellers' behaviour and costs of cleaning and repair. Given the reduction in negative activity and the increase in respectful conduct, interactions between Transit Officers and passengers are also more positive and less likely to result in injury.

**10. *Publicity of injury rates***

Professions which have a risk of fatal accidents are usually active in investigating where human factors and systems fail. This is especially true of medicine and the airplanes. In these instances there is significant evidence to indicate that the publication of injury rates is positively correlated with the reduction of injury rates. Even though there are no appropriate grounds for cross comparison of RTS Transit Officer injury rates with the injury rates of other public transport jurisdictions, the publication of these injury rates could gain public sympathy and support and would provide valuable year on year data for evidence-based interventions in training and communications.

**11. *An awareness campaign within RTS on the Transit Officer role and the difficulties that they face each day***

Transit Officers perceive that other RTS employees do not understand how important their safety and security role on the rail system is, or the difficulties they face each day. This situation is compounded by not publishing their injury and incident statistics. It is recommended that an article be written for the Transnet news or similar, outlining the Transit Officer role and some of the problems they face. This article could be followed up at intervals with stories about particular situations that Transit Officers have successfully dealt with. This will assist in improving the Transit Officer profile, improve morale and assist in breaking down the barriers between 'us and them' - Transit Officers and the rest of RTS.

**12. *A Transit Officer of the month award***

Transit Officers are open to criticism from members of the public with complaints referred to the RTS Internal Review Section, the Police and the Corruption and Crime Commission. However, the excellent work that the Transit Officers undertake remains comparatively unrecognised. It is recommended that a monthly award in the form of a certificate be presented to the 'Transit Officer of the month' by the Chief Executive Officer of RTS. This will provide an opportunity to market the award to both RTS members and the general public, with the potential effect of improved morale amongst Transit Officers.

**13. *Benchmark with other public transport authorities, national and international***

Research of world's best practice in the reduction of injury rates indicates that high-performing organisations not only publish their injury statistics, they also benchmark against each other to share ideas, practices and the development of staff. Such a strategy is also open to the RTS. An added benefit is that staff members in these exceptional organisations are made aware that safety is a high organisational priority and that injury reduction is a focus of much management activity.

**14. *Review of the current effectiveness of OC (Oleoresin Capsicum) spray and determine whether a suitable alternative such as captor would be more applicable***

It is recommended that the RTS reviews the 'use of force option' of oleoresin capsicum spray, and determines whether there is a more effective, and suitable, alternative option.

**15. *A formal 'use of force' framework***

It is recommended that the RTS implement a formal 'use of force' framework where Transit Officers continually assess and reassess situations considering all 'use of force' options available at the time, including the ability to withdraw until backup arrives.

**16. *Further research***

Although all consultants and researchers like to recommend that their study has thrown up opportunities for further research, this is the case here. There are a number of specific ways in which further research would illuminate injury-reduction strategies for the RTS. Such research could involve conventional consulting practices or it might entail a further request for public funds; for example through the co-payment of the Australian Research Council, as has happened here with a 5:1 beneficial leverage of funding. Particular areas in which further research might be considered include:

- Passenger-based research concerning the recognition, role, responsibilities and powers of Transit Officers;
- Further study of the opportunities for, and a mechanism for recognising, a Field Training Officer cadre;
- Developing, trialling and evaluating instruction in targeted verbal communication and negotiating skills and scenario training, to reduce the incidence of miscommunication and negative outcomes;
- An investigation of public perceptions of Transit Officer injury rates to inform a campaign around positive disclosure and the public's shared responsibility for respectful and collaborative engagement;
- The development and trial of self-paced training packages to inform Transit Officers about relevant safety-related activities on their line, and on other lines;
- Develop, trial and evaluate the introduction of the Compstat paradigm into the security section.
- Monitoring the attitudes and effectiveness of a 'broken window' policy which might initially be trialled on a single line.

All of these research options could be written up for further research, deepening engagement with a number of strategies for reducing the risk of injury.



## Limitations

The Rail Transport System is to be congratulated for supporting this research and the study team is deeply grateful for the opportunity to work with all levels of staff in this important investigation.

This project has nonetheless experienced some limitations as a result of the research team not having access to:

- details of Transit Officer work-related injury rates;
- relevant internal reports;
- policy and management meetings including some safety meetings, and
- attendance at reviews of, for example, training; the X-plan.

The methodological approach and the industrial environment, together with some personal circumstances on the part of the ethnographer, have meant that the project's duration was extended a further twelve months. This is regretted given the importance placed upon interventions with a view to reducing injury.

## Timeframe

March	Present draft report.	
April	Refine final report.	
May	Refine final report. Confirm distribution list	Recommend safety intervention for ARC funds
June	Present final report	
July	Institute intervention	
August		
September		
October	Receive feedback on intervention	
November	Conclude research and sign off	Final report prepared for ARC
December	Publications	PhD completed and submitted
2011+	Liaise when extended research possibilities arise	Develop, prepare and apply for relevant competitive funding

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