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DISPERSED LEADERSHIP, POWER AND CHANGE: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY USING A CRITICAL MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

Abstract:

Using a critical management framework I provide a genealogical account of a police organization's attempt to implement what senior officers in its behavioural change division described as a dispersed leadership (Bryman, 1996; Gordon, 2002) strategy. I describe the organization and provide a detailed account of the dynamics that emerge as groups and individuals who historically held positions of power found themselves reporting to one of many designated leaders. The account depicts how the organization's dispersion of leadership, while on the surface represents a new and successful endeavour, is rendered problematic by the organization's historical constitution of power.

Keywords: Leadership, power, change, critical management.

“Why is it that after a Royal Commission, major structural change, three years of ongoing change management initiatives and one hundred and forty million dollars, nothing has changed?”

John, one of the senior officers in the behavioural change division, made this statement during a conversation we had prior to me giving a research seminar to the officers in the division¹. The statement was indicative of the group's frustration at the time and represents the problem statement from which a number of research projects have emerged. The concern for John and his fellow officers was that whilst there was evidence of structural changes in the Service by way of the introduction of post bureaucratic forms of organisation, the mindset and behaviour of many police personnel was not changing: cognitive and behavioural change was a key objective of the organisation's change initiatives. In short, John thought that something was happening at a “deeper level” of the organisation that he and his team “couldn't put their finger on”.

This scenario presented itself as an opportunity to provide empirically insight into the critique that organisation theorists, Courpasson (2006), Clegg (1989) and others have made in relation to the adoption of post bureaucratic structures and strategies in many of today's public institutions. The argument presented by these theorists is that a shift in power relations is central to the introduction of post-bureaucratic organisation forms; much of the pertinent literature (not all), however, is either apolitical or adopts narrow resource dependency approach to power relations. The embedded nature of power and its

¹ It is acknowledge that some researchers, as per one previous reviewer of this paper, might argue that one would expect a dispersed leadership strategy to be problematic in a police organization and thus the results were to be expected. This is precisely why the organization was selected. As Weick (1999) argued, researchers need to seek research settings in which their theory is highly likely to be replicated.

effect on post-bureaucratic change initiatives, especially those related to the dispersion or sharing of leadership, remains under explored.

The catalyst for the police service's organisation and behavioural change initiatives was the findings and recommendations of a major government inquiry which revealed widespread unethical and corrupt behaviour throughout its ranks. The inquiry specifically found that poor leadership and outmoded management practices allowed corruption and unethical behaviour to emerge and flourish. The inquiry, amongst other things, recommended that the organization introduce leadership and management strategies that were more congruent with contemporary management theories and practices (Wood, 1997). The behavioural change division explained that as part of the broader post bureaucratic initiatives a number of the police service's Local Area Commands² (LACs) had been attempting to disperse their leadership by dissolving traditional divisional boundaries, which were based on function, and form cross functional teams. Further, authority and decision-making was formally transferred to the leaders of these teams. Interestingly, in the LAC that I studied, this meant that previously autonomous and powerful individuals and groups such as criminal investigators (detectives) found themselves reporting to team leaders rather than divisional managers.

1.0 THE THEORETICAL CONTEXT

The theory that underpins the post-bureaucratic forms literature will not be discussed in its entirety here. Rather, with John's problem statement in mind, the study uses a critical management framework to explore the effects of embedded forms of power on the introduction of one of the police service's post-bureaucratic initiatives; that is, the introduction of a dispersed leadership strategy. Embedded forms of power are defined here as forms of power that are less readily identifiable; overtime, through disciplined practice, they are constituted as part of everyday life and thus taken for granted as part of the natural order of things (Clegg, 1989; Haugaard, 1997).

Bryman (1996) recognizes the founding theoretical approaches to dispersed leadership as *Superleadership* (Manz and Simms, 1991), *Self-Leadership* (Kirkman & Rosen, 1999; Uhl-Bien & Graen, 1998; Kouzes & Posner, 1993; Williams, 1997), *Leadership as a Process* (Hosking, 1991; Knights & Willmott, 1992) and *Distributed Leadership* (Senge, 1999). These founding approaches and more recently, Pastor et al (2002) on *Shared Leadership*, Bono and Judge (2003) on *Self Leadership* and Carson et al (2007) on *Distributed Leadership*, have provided valuable insight into leadership within post-bureaucratic organisation

² A Local Area Command is a geographical region that contains several police stations and approximately 100 -150 staff.

structures. However, a critical perspective, such as that provided by Gordon (2002) illustrates that, in general, contributors to the dispersed leadership literature, adopt either an apolitical or normalized approach to power and consequently under explore the problematic nature of the political dynamics associated with the dispersion of leadership in an organization. The present study provides a contribution to the literature by providing empirical insights and analysis into the development of dispersed leadership at the Jumbuck LAC and shows how the organization's historical constitution of power unfortunately renders the development problematic. The results leave one to question whether, in a practical sense, the theory of dispersed leadership offers anything new; or, like Hunt and Dodge (2000) critically assessed of the leadership field in general, dispersed leadership theory represents a form of leadership déjà vu.

2.0 DISPERSED LEADERSHIP AND POWER: A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE

Using a critical management framework involves exploring the role of power in social theories and settings. Here, such a framework is used to search for evidence of dualities in the main theories that make up the dispersed leadership literature (these theories will be outlined shortly), along with an assessment of the extent to which alternate and contrary concepts, such as 'privilege', 'domination' and 'discipline' are masked but nevertheless remain embedded within the theory (Boje, 2001; Gordon, 2002).

In a generic sense, dispersed leadership theories represent the distribution or sharing of leadership skills and responsibilities throughout an organization and have emerged in response to the widespread adoption of new or post-bureaucratic organizational forms that are organic in orientation (Bolman and Deal, 2003). Reflecting on the titles of these theories gives an indication of the practical forms they might take (see figure 2). Primarily these forms promote a practice where employees are taught to lead themselves, taking responsibility for their own direction and control. These theories are defined as non-traditional in their orientation because, unlike the dualistic nature of the power relationship between leaders and followers promoted by more orthodox leadership approaches, these theories espouse a sharing of power between leaders and followers (Gordon, 2002).

The sharing of power between leaders and followers, at least in a theoretical sense, blurs the normally clear differential boundaries between "the leader" and "the follower". In short, if followers are empowered to lead themselves, with respect to orthodox approaches to leadership, one must question who the leader is and who the follower is (Gordon, 2002). Furthermore, when leadership skills and responsibilities are dispersed or shared throughout an organization, unlike orthodox approaches to leadership, the emphasis shifts away from the traits, attributes or style of those extraordinary individuals that have been recognised as leaders. That is, there is a shift of emphasis away from "the leader" to the "process" of leadership. In

short, dispersed leadership theory, perhaps unwittingly, implies that leadership is not necessarily something that an entity does; rather, it is something that many people can do (Gordon, 2002).

Insert Figures 1 & 2

Bearing in mind the emphasis given to the sharing of power in the theory of dispersed leadership, it might seem reasonable to expect the construct of power to occupy a central position in the development of dispersed leadership literature. However, a more critical analysis of the literature shows that this is not the case. Indeed, as per their predecessors in their field, the dispersed leadership theorists tend to normalize power. By way of example, Katzenbach and Smith (1993), in their work on real teams appear to assume that the devolution of leadership power and control to team leaders will occur unproblematically. Such an assumption implies that the organizational elite will willingly transfer the power of leadership to team leaders and, when doing so, whether intended or not, will have no overriding influence on the nature of this transference or its ongoing management. But even if the intention of the organizational elite is to share power the nature of their historical power relations with subordinates may prevent them from achieving this. For instance, the tacit meaning systems constituted over time may cause subordinates to see such an attempt as inappropriate. In such a case, organizational elite run the risk of losing their “voice” (Haugaard, 1997), that is, legitimacy as a leader.

In their founding work on Superleadership, Manz and Sims (1991: 22) argue that a superleader empowers his or her followers because he or she teaches them to lead themselves. However, the only explicit mention of power they make is within a table in which they compare the characteristics of superleadership with those of more traditional leadership approaches. In this table Manz and Sims assert that power is shared in the practice of superleadership, but they offer no critical analysis of the nature of power in superleadership settings or how the sharing of power might be achieved.

Insert Table 1

Sims and Lorenzi (1992: 281) do offer an attempt to explain how to share power by suggesting that in order to empower their followers, leaders “must be trained to *model* the *desired* self-leadership behaviour on the part of their subordinates”. Such a suggestion appears to neglect that it is promoting the sharing of power from a sovereign position, which sets up a theoretical paradox in regard the empowerment of followers. While it is acknowledged that total empowerment is not necessarily the objective, if, as shall be seen in the results of this study, an organization’s antecedents reflect its history, which for most, would involve the practices of more traditional forms of organization (hierarchy, authority and compliance), there is a strong likelihood that irrespective of certain people being formally empowered as leaders, others will continue to infer a need to comply with the wishes of those entities who have traditionally held

power; such a level of constraint runs the risk of resulting in the continued centralization of leadership's power and control, which contradicts the theory that underpins the dispersed leadership literature.

If one traces the analysis of power through the dispersed leadership literature including the most recent contributions to the field, one will find that the same unproblematic and normative approach to power pervades. As a result, while field makes a valuable contribution to understanding leadership in contemporary organisation, much of it remains somewhat problematic.

3.0 METHODS

The Research Framework

The study is interested in empirically exploring the tension between historically constituted forms of power and the practice of dispersed leadership in a particular local setting. I chose genealogy as my methodological exemplar to guide the research into this creative tension. Genealogy has its roots in Nietzsche and is a method for studying social patterns, their evolution and change within an historical context. Drawing on Nietzsche, Foucault (1994: 76-77) maintains of genealogy that it:

requires patience and a knowledge of details, and it depends on a vast accumulation of source materials. Its "cyclopean monuments" are constructed from "discrete and apparently insignificant truths and according to a rigorous method" ... it rejects the meta-historical deployment of ideal significations and indefinite teleologies. It opposes itself to the search for "origins".

For Foucault genealogy differs from more traditional scientific methods in that it is not grounded in a teleological viewpoint or "grand narrative" (Ritzer, 1996: 609-610). Teleologies and grand narratives may be recognized as large bodies of knowledge that aspire to a particular normative version of how things "should" be. Rather than reinforcing a grand-narrative or overarching body of knowledge, genealogy attempts to interpret a plurality of local knowledge(s), and the interaction between knowledge(s). A "local knowledge" may be recognized as a form of knowledge that is culturally, practically and contextually significant, existing independent and at the extremity of, a broader social system. So, to address research questions to power relations sustaining and changing the normalcy of deviant local practice and knowledge, I needed neither to bring theory to context to judge it nor to construct theory from context to correct normal theory with deviant practice. Instead, I needed to engage dialogue in creative tension between theory and practice, abstractions and context, theories-in-books and theories-in-use.

Genealogy does not rely on a relatively fixed reference point, hence it does not set out to “pinpoint” the beginning and end of local knowledge/s. Rather, genealogy is grey (Foucault, 1971: 76), it embraces the discursive nature of empirical environments, shifting and changing as they do. The data material will incorporate many different histories, people, viewpoints, events and contexts: it is the patterns that emerge from the mixture of all these elements that is of interest for genealogy; by making its starting point the small and local happenings of social systems, genealogy focuses on recording the actualities of social interaction and thus, avoids any potential deception couched within the promotion of what theoretically “ought” to be the case at the expense of what is “actual” or the correction of typological theory from normal practice.

In sum, genealogy embodies a methodology that can gain access to, and expose, the unobtrusive dynamics of power that exist at a deeper level in social settings: it can expose the hidden tensions and paradoxes affecting power relationships in the police organization under question. Genealogy clearly has a micro orientation and lends itself to methods that are focused on achieving accuracy. As a measure of accuracy for my study, we needed to employ methods that were not only suitable to genealogy but also processes that systematized our interpretative leap (these methods are summarized in table 4); since I am interested in what ‘actually’ occurs rather than what ‘should’ occur, such processes help me to limit the effects of my own ideals and viewpoints.

Central to the introduction of a dispersed leadership strategy by the organization in question was a shift the power relations that had been part of partial of its extended history. For more than a century the organization had employed a paramilitary approach that was characterized by a command and control approach to leadership, functional divisions and bureaucratic systems (Wood, 1997). The review of the leadership literature indicates that in general orthodox approaches to leadership reflect clear boundaries of identity between “the leader” and “the follower”, while the sharing of power between leaders and followers in dispersed leadership strategies blurs this boundary. Clegg (1990) argued that a shift from modern to postmodern forms could be represented conceptually as a shift from *differentiated* forms to *de-differentiated* forms. Drawing on Clegg’s work I argue that orthodox forms of leadership can be represented by the concepts of *differentiation* (clear boundaries of identity between the leader and the follower) and *domination* (the superiority of leaders over followers). In contrast, underlying the dispersed approach to leadership are the concepts of *de-differentiation* (empowerment blurs the boundaries of identity in hierarchically based power relationships) and *democracy* (the sharing of power and control).

Eisenhardt (1989) suggests that concepts used as *a priori* guides can help focus the research process and prevent the researcher from becoming lost in a myriad of data. Accordingly, the concepts of *differentiation*, *de-differentiation*, *domination* and *democracy* are used to guide the data collection and analysis phases of the research. In short, data that is indicative of these concepts will be coded and categorized with respect to each concept (the categorization process will be outlined shortly). By using a priori concepts generated from extant literature to guide the inductive study, the research framework draws on both deductive (testing theory in practice) and inductive (theory emerging from practice) theory building approaches (Langley, 1999). In this way, the framework takes steps towards bridging the gap between theory and practice (tensions in existing theory guiding the analysis of the adopted theory in practice). The emergent theory will be grounded in the tensions and paradoxes between theory and practice, in this case, the theory and practice of shifting the limits to power in an organization attempting to implement a dispersed leadership strategy.

Insert figure 3

Data Collection

When I first arrived a Jumbuck LAC I was introduced as a researcher from a university that had been working with the Service for a number of years focusing on its reform initiatives. Like I had done in previous research projects with the Service I initially set about meeting people and immediately realized that I was being treated with some suspicion; this is understandable when you consider that since the Royal Commission the organization was constantly under surveillance by the Police Integrity Commission (PIC). On numerous occasions I was asked, “you’re not a spy are you?” I carried my ethics approval documents with me to ensure the integrity of my research and to gain the confidence of my research subjects.

I spent the first 3 months talking with members of the command whose roles spread across management, intelligence gathering, operational (general street policing), traffic control and criminal investigations (detectives). I watched workers in their everyday work activities and asked them questions about the reform. My objective at this early stage was to identify key players and activities in the reform process and to develop plans and guides for more in depth interviews.

During this early phase I established a schedule for visiting the LAC one to two days (4-6 hours) per week. I attempted to spend different days of the week. At times this schedule would vary depending on my other academic responsibilities and when there were special events on such meetings being held at the LAC.

After 4 to 5 months, I extended my data gathering process primarily through interviews, observations of naturally occurring interactions and conversations with key informants, but also from sources such as organizational memos, flyers, newsletters and public documents. During this period my data collection and analysis was iterative. That is, while I was collecting data and becoming more familiar with the setting I was constantly analysing my data which helped with the revision of research questions, developing a list of key informants and identifying key issues and events that could be explored in more depth through interviews. When my data collection ended I had accumulated more than 200 research hours in which I conducted 34 interviews ranging from as short as 10 minutes to as long as 3 hours, which, along with my field notes, resulted in 14,840 paragraphs of text that required coding.

In conducting the interviews, I tried as much as possible, given the constraints of voluntary participation, to interview officers from different teams, positions, ethnicity and gender. I was particularly interested in interviewing those people in dispersed leadership positions and those who had previously held high status positions (i.e. detectives). I also interviewed members from the Behavioural Change Group. During the interviews, I began by asking open-ended questions and at times I asked participants to tell me their story in regard to the reform program. As the interviews progressed and key topics related to leadership and power emerged I probed into their responses for key examples.

Data Analysis

To add rigour in my attempt to control my own ideas about the way things “should” be I employed theoretical sampling procedures. Theoretical sampling is sampling on the basis of concepts that prove to be theoretically relevant. The term “proven theoretically relevant,” means that certain concepts become significant in the data because they are repeatedly present or notably absent when comparing incident after incident (Eisenhardt, 1989). Through systematic coding and analysis procedures, some concepts become more relevant than other concepts (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 177). The aim is to sample those incidents and events that are indicative of these recurring concepts. Such an aim necessarily implies that data collection and analysis is an iterative process.

My sampling procedure however, was slightly different to what might be considered as “pure” theoretical sampling, in that I began with *a priori* concepts. I was interested in examples of text that proved theoretically relevant to these concepts. Accordingly, my sampling method involved running a series of quantitative frequency measures of text examples with themes that were represented structures, practice and effects that were related to my *a priori* concepts. These text examples were coded as a sub-concept. With each data collection and analysis phase the data that is indicative of those sub-concepts that

dominate (high frequency of occurrence) the dataset were kept, while all others were discarded. In short, the data was runs through a series of disaggregation and re-aggregation processes (see tables 5), based on quantitatively (frequency count) identified dominant sub-concepts and relationship patterns between these sub-concepts. The result is a series of datasets with test examples that outline structures, practices and effects that are related to each of the *a priori* concepts.

These datasets were then analyzed qualitatively. To add further rigour I developed an interpretative schema (see table 5). This schema represents the operationalization of the theory that underpins genealogical principles (Foucault, 1991), drawing on forms of deconstruction (Boje, 2001; Martin, 1990) and discourse analysis principles (Clegg, 1975; Laclou & Mouffe, 1985; Fairclough, 1989; 1995; van Dijk, 1997) to do so. For example, the schema focuses on bringing dualisms to the surface – relationships in which one party is privileged with a taken for granted right to power over another – which are reflected in representations of differential relationships that have been historically constituted in organizational meaning systems, and are thus taken for granted (Clegg, 2001: 139).

The schema also draws upon the principles of story telling and narratology (Clegg, 1975; Boje, 1995; 2001; Flyvbjerg, 1998; 2001). Wittgenstein (1968: 61) maintained that to acquire a rich understanding of social settings, actual practices needed studying before the rules that are “supposed” to govern them. He was not satisfied with focusing only on those practices open to public scrutiny – the surface structure – but wished to investigate the deep structures that lay unobtrusively, awaiting investigation. For instance, to know a city one does not just read a guide to it: one needs to experience life not only in those fine boulevards marked out clearly but also those side streets and back-alleys too deeply embedded in everyday life to be worthy of remark (Flyvbjerg, 2001: 85-86). The aim therefore, was to present the data in such a way that, similarly to a narrative, the story that represents what occurred in the research setting gradually unfolds from the diverse, complex, and sometimes-conflicting data. And, in response to Weick’s (1999) suggestion, the interpretation and analysis were to be presented not as an omniscient account but as a series of reflections (on/of the data) that leave scope for readers to draw their own interpretations and conclusions.

Insert figure 4 and table 3

Insert figure 5 table 4

Insert Table 5

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Quantitative trends

Due to space restrictions, this section summarises the main points of the data analysis and findings. Those thematic codes that have dominant frequency counts identify trends in the data (see table 3), which can be further investigated qualitatively. It must be noted, that these trends are not presented as definitive “truths”; rather, they are presented as representations of the common ways in which officers talk about and act within their work settings.

As mentioned earlier, the qualitative analysis process involved analysing what officers said and did with respect to each of the elements that make up the interpretative schema outlined above. Table 6 provides examples of this analysis process.

Insert Table 6

The research question is concerned with how historically constituted forms of power unobtrusively effect the practice of dispersed leadership. The quantitative trends (see dominant frequency counts in table 3) reveal that officers, despite the implementation of structural changes aimed at facilitating the dispersion of leadership, continue to interpret their organization as having an orthodox approach to organizing. The dominant themes in the practices database indicates that officers place an emphasis on the need to protect themselves, seeking legitimacy for their relative position, and resisting acts of power on behalf of other members of the organization. The data in this database also links historical forms of power to surveillance, punishment and deception. These trends seem to indicate an environment that is consistent with that of a siege mentality. Somewhat unsurprisingly, the dominant trends in the “effect” database are “fear” and “reactive policing”. Reactive policing is where officers, rather than thinking and acting strategically in regard to policing crime, simply react to crime. One of the key objectives of the organizations reform program was to move away from reactive policing by emphasising the need for the introduction of more strategic and proactive approaches to policing (Wood, 1997).

Qualitative analysis³

The qualitative analysis (see table 6 for an example of the process) provided more in depth insight to these quantitative trends.

Taken for Granted Realities: The analysis revealed the presence of a number of taken for granted realities that, over time, have become universally accepted as essential “truths”. For instance, officers in historically constituted positions of power, in particular those related to rank and the superior status of the detectives, appear to have a right to power that other officers are expected to obey; also, for this

³ Due to word count restrictions examples from the data some of the following categories will not be presented however they are available for inspection if required.

organization it seems to be a taken for granted “truth” that those officers who challenge this right must be punished.

Historical Patterns of Decision Legitimacy

Furthermore, the analysis revealed historical patterns of relationship delineation and legitimacy in decision making that reflected the taken for granted realities mentioned above. Officers continually refer to the dualistic nature of their relationships; relationships that existed within the organisation’s previous structure, characterized by clear differential boundaries that privilege rank, specialist officers (mainly detectives) as well as seniority and operational experience. Of particular interest, in regard to the research question, is a tension between the historically constituted patterns of legitimacy in decision-making and the decision-making legitimacy formally proposed by the dispersed leadership strategy. This is evident in Senior Officers voicing their disapproval for, or perhaps it might be more appropriate to say misunderstanding of, the reform agenda’s focus on democratic forms of control through the dispersion of leadership, the promotion of teamwork and empowerment strategies. For example:

XXXX [Assistant Commissioner] believed the behavioral change program [reform program developed by the Crime Management Support Unit] was unsustainable because it pitted front line [officers] against their senior officers, he stated:

“It [the behavioural change program] was extremely divisive ... and never going to work ... [it suggested that] you people at the front line are right and you people in management are wrong” (Document 'ABC', Section 0, Paragraphs 28-37).

One can observe that the senior management officer who made this statement appears to miss understand the program’s objectives. The program was not aimed at taking management’s voice away, rather it was aimed at giving front lines officers a voice; by de-differentiating the differential power relationship between senior management and front line police officers, front line officers have some input into decision making; more importantly, if front line officers recognize that they do have a voice they are more likely to speak out against corruption and other forms of inappropriate behaviour on behalf of senior and fellow officers. This senior officer’s view of the way things “should” be reinforces a clear differential boundary between management and lower level officers; a differential boundary that reinforces an historically constituted “us and them” dualism between senior and front line officers.

The Ordering of Statements

In regard to the ordering of statements, the analysis revealed a discourse of dominance; a discourse that reflects the essentialisms that underpin social interaction within the organization and the differential boundaries that have historically governed legitimacy with respect to decision making and discursive action. Officers continually refer to the panoptical gaze of dominant individuals and groups, which, due to its omnipresence, further constitutes a siege mentality, a continual sense of fear, and a need for protection. Within the organization, a sense of protection and security is the reason for aligning oneself with a powerful others, whether these others are corrupt or not is immaterial. The data reveals that senior officers and detectives, in particular those who traditionally held leadership positions, continue to practice acts of domination (disciplining and punishing other officers) despite the introduction of a dispersed leadership strategy. Interestingly, these senior officers and detectives rationalize their acts of domination as enhanced supervision. But, these officers appear unaware that domination and supervision have very different meanings; for them, supervision necessarily entails acts of domination; by inducing fear through discipline and punishment, one secures obedience and through this control.

What is alarming however is that these leaders seem completely ignorant of the link between domination and corruption. As Foucault (1982) argued and Flyvbjerg (1998) empirically verified, those people in positions of dominance, because they are less likely to be challenged by others, are vulnerable to the practice of rationalizing their own version of rationality; in other words they, as happened previously in the organization as revealed by the royal commission⁴, may rationalize corrupt behaviour as being legitimate.

In summary, the universal and essential truths that officers in the organization have come to take for granted, unobtrusively constrain the way these officers think and act. This constraint, over time, has resulted in “codes of order” or, “rules of the game” (Clegg, 1989; Haugaard, 1997) continuing to render acts of domination legitimate. Rather than stand alone, officers learn that it is within their best interest, to protect themselves by forming social support networks, that while offering a haven of safety and comfort, constrain their behaviour and reinforce the existing constitution of power: a constitution of power that legitimates domination and through this, undermines the organization’s reform agenda and especially the LAC’s attempt to empower its newly appointed dispersed leaders.

⁴ The Royal Commission found that officers practices what they termed “noble cause corruption”, which involved practices such as: fabricating and planting evidence to obtain a conviction against a person they believed deserved to be found guilty; giving criminals who supplied information that lead to the conviction of other criminals a “green light” to practice acts of crime, which involved armed robberies, drug trafficking, gaming and such like; plus many others (Wood, 1997).

CONCLUSION

This paper has by no means set out to privilege any one form of leadership and management over another; it is acknowledged that hierarchical structures as well as authoritarian and disciplined based control mechanisms are customary for many organizations, particularly police organizations. Rather, this study focuses on exposing important issues for organizational leaders and managers in regard to the wide spread adoption of post-bureaucratic organizational forms that promote a shift towards democratic control mechanism such as dispersed leadership: the “right” or “wrong” of adopting such forms is not the concern, the unobtrusive consequences of doing so is.

A critical review of what the mainstream management literature has to say about dispersed leadership shows that it adopts a normative approach to power. When viewed with a more critical perspective, the concepts that underpin the more orthodox approaches to leadership in organizations (*differentiation* and *domination*) are in tension with those promoted by democratic approaches such as dispersed leadership (*de-differentiation* and *democracy*). I argued that it is essential for managers to be aware of such theoretical tensions because they highlight where problems are likely to occur in practice.

With these tensions in mind, the paper developed a research framework that draws on genealogy, grounded theory and discourse analysis techniques. The framework focuses the research process on the effects of these tensions by using concepts indicative of the tensions as *a priori* codes to guide the data collection and analysis procedures. In consequence however, the emerging theory is not strictly grounded, that is, it does not simply emerge from the data; rather, the theory that does emerge from the data is grounded in the *a priori* codes and thus the theoretical tensions identified.

The quantitative analysis revealed broad trends that link historically constituted forms of power within the police organization with the need for officers to protect themselves against acts of power on behalf of other members of the organization. What’s more, the trends also link the formation of networks to surveillance, punishment and deception. These trends highlight the possible existence of a siege mentality that is underpinned by a pervading sense of fear.

The qualitative analysis provided further insight to these trends, revealing taken for granted realities, which, over time, have resulted in “codes of order” being constituted; codes of order that continue, despite the organization’s attempt to disperse its leadership, to render acts of domination legitimate. Of particular interest is that while police organizations are well known for their “brotherhood” networks that are based on mate-ship, loyalty and commitment, the data here reveals that the formation of these networks has

more to do with protection brought about by fear, security and safety, if not survival, than it does with a mate-ship brotherhood. Officers openly talk about their fear of retribution from dominant individuals and groups in the organization and the need for them to protect themselves. Senior officers and detectives in particular, through a variety of mediums, some of which are paradoxically aimed at creating a more democratic work environment, continue to practice acts of domination and punishment. By way of emphasizing the problematic nature of acts of domination, the work of Foucault (1970; 1979; 1982; 1989), Clegg (1989) and Flyvbjerg (1998) shows that it is those in positions of dominance, unchecked by their obedient followers, that are the more likely fall into the trap of rationalizing their own version of rationality: for the organization in question, a version of rationality that in the past rationalized corrupt practices as not only “rational” but also “right” and “just”.

The study makes a contribution by illustrating how the extant theory unwittingly neglects important issues related to power. While in theory the organization’s implementation of a dispersed leadership strategy should result in the dispersion of power and through this the devolution of previous dominant groups that were subject to corruption, in practice the strategy appears to be little more than a structural façade. Rather than dispersing power and enhancing democracy, the historical constitution of power continues to unobtrusively legitimize acts of domination on behalf of those groups and individuals (senior officers and detectives) who previously held formal positions of power. While one may argue that such findings would be expected within a police organization, the organization is not unique in its attempt to implement dispersed leadership. Many organizations with similar histories including (new) public and private institutions are attempting to implement similar initiatives aimed at empowering lower level workers with leadership and decision making responsibilities. The case presented here clearly demonstrates that the normalized approach to power will render such initiatives problematic and that a more detailed understanding of the embedded nature and complex dynamics of power is required to enhance the implementation of such initiatives.

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APPROACH	THEORY	
TRAIT	The Great Man Theory (Bowden, 1927) Trait Theory (Bingham, 1927) Leader Dominance Theory (Schenk, 1928)	} COMMON LINKS: Reflect traditional functionalist organizational structures Leader/follower dualism central to leadership Leader/follower relationship differentiated dualism Leaders attributed with 'natural' superiority Power treated unproblematically UNDERLYING CONCEPTS: Differentiation (clear boundaries of identity – leader/follower)
STYLE	Ohio State Studies (Fleishman et al, 1955) Reinforced Change Theory (Bass, 1960) Michigan State Studies (Lickert, 1961) Theory X & Theory Y (McGregor, 1960; 1966) Managerial Grid Model (Blake & Mouton, 1964) Operand Theory of Leadership (Sims, 1977)	
CONTINGENCY	Leader Role Theory (Homans, 1959) Contingency Theory (Felder, 1964) Situational Theory (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969; 1977) Path Goal Theory (Evans, 1970; House, 1971) Multiple Linkage Theory (Yukle, 1971; 1989) Normative Theory (Vroom & Yetton, 1973; Vroom & Jago, 1988)	
	Transactional Vertical Dyad Linkage/Leader Member exchange Theory (Dansereau et al, 1975) Role Making Model (Graen & Cashman, 1975) Reciprocal Influence Theory (Greene, 1975) Social Exchange Theory (Hollander, 1979)	
NEW LEADER-SHIP	Transformational Charismatic Theory (House, 1977) Transformation Theory (Burns, 1978) Self Fulfilling Prophecy (Eden, 1984; Field, 1989) Transformational Leadership (Bass 1985) Culture Theory Z (Ouchi & Jaeger, 1978) McKinsey 7-S Framework (Pascale & Athos, 1981) Management of Meaning (Schein, 1985)	

Figure 1: Traditional approaches to organizational leadership, common links and underlying concepts.

(Please note: this table has been adopted in part from Van Seters, D.A.. & Field, R.H. (1990) The evolution of leadership theory. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 3:29-45.

APPROACH	THEORY	
DISPERSED	Leadership as Processes and skills (Hosking, 1991) Superleadership (Manz & Sims, 1991; 1996) Superleadership (Sims & Lorenzi, 1992) Real Teams (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993) Leadership Transfer (Kouzes and Posner (1993) Self-leadership (Williams, 1997; Uhl-Bien & Graen, 1998; Kirkman & Rosen, 1999) Leadership as process (Hosking, 1991; Knights & Willmott, 1992) Distributed Leadership (Senge, 1999)	COMMON LINKS: Reflect organic organizational structures Leader/follower dualism challenged Leader/follower relationship de-differentiated Leader & follower share power Power treated unproblematically UNDERLYING CONCEPTS: De-differentiation (blurring leader/follower identities) Collaboration (sharing of power between leader & follower)

Figure 2: Dispersed approaches to organizational leadership, common links and underlying concepts.

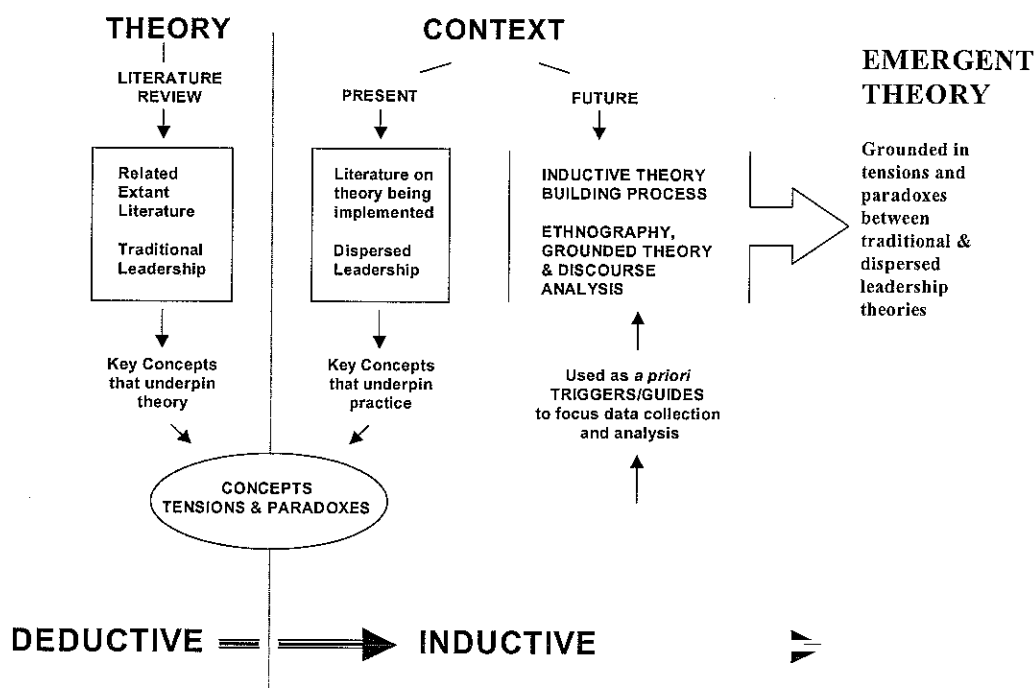


Figure 3: The Research Framework

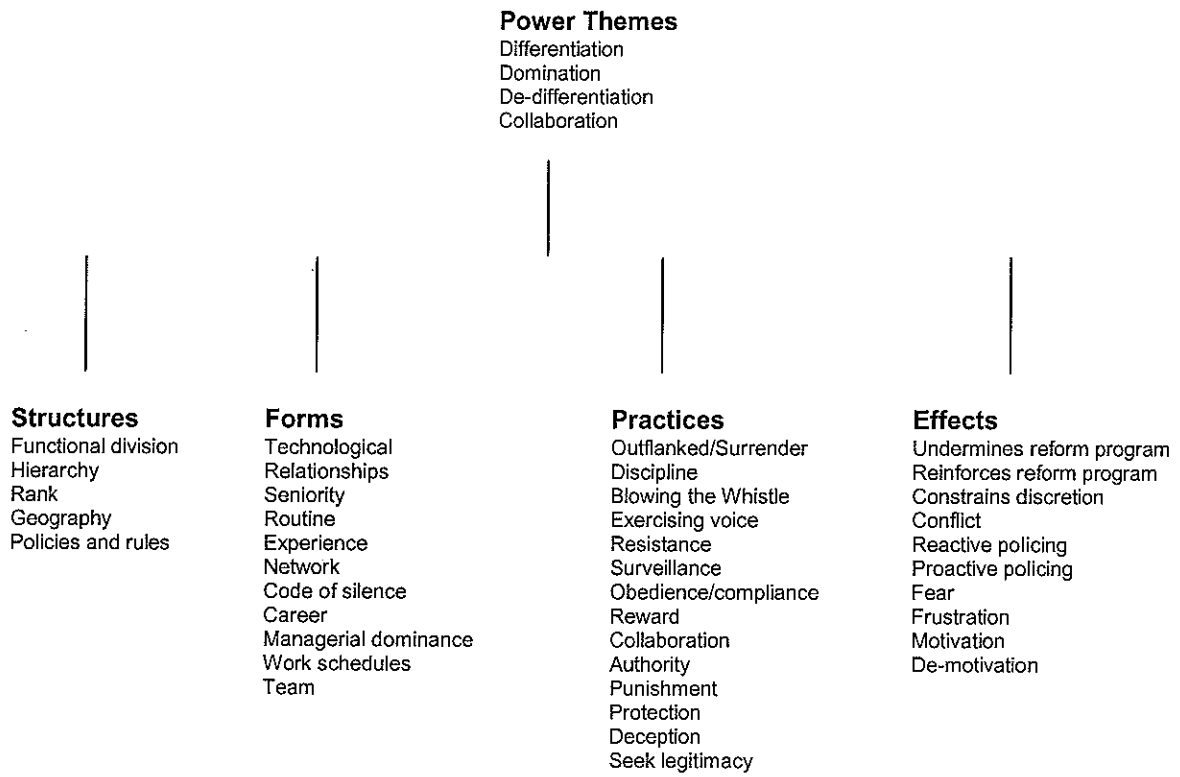


Figure 4: Databases, database links, codes and sub-code relationships

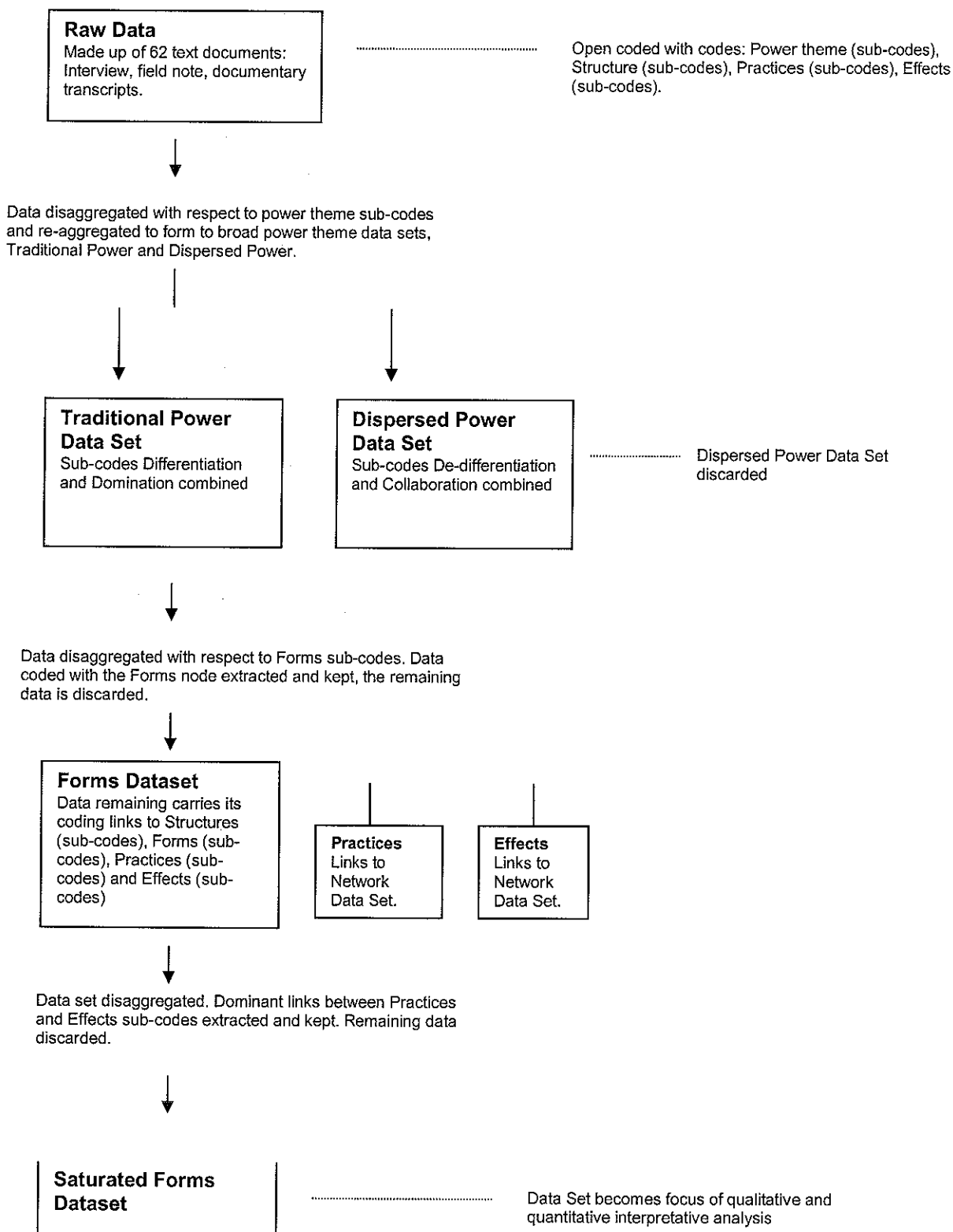


Figure 5: Theoretical sampling and data saturation process

	STRONG MAN	TRANSACTOR	VISIONARY HERO	SUPERLEADER
FOCUS	Commands	Rewards	Visions	Self-leaders
TYPE OF POWER	Position/ authority/ coercive	Reward	Relational/ inspirational shared	
SOURCE OF WISDOM AND DIRECTION	Leader	Leader	Leader	Mostly followers, then the leader
TYPICAL LEADER BEHAVIORS	Direction	Goal setting	Communication of leader's vision	Seven steps to super-leadership
	Command	Contingent personal reward	Change in the status quo	
	Intimidation	Contingent material reward	Exhortation	
	Non-contingent reprimand	Contingent Reprimand	Inspirational Persuasion	
SUBORDINATE RESPONSE	Fear-based compliance	Calculative compliance	Emotional commitment based on vision	Commitment based on ownership

SOURCE: C. C. Manz and H.P. Sims, Jr., *SuperLeadership: Leading Others to Lead Themselves* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1989).

Table 1: Reproduction of the table that Sims and Lorenzi (1992: 297) use that leaves the cell for power in Superleader scenario blank.

Code	Sub-code	No. of Intersecting Coding References	Dominant Coding Reference Yes/No	Quantitative Trend
Structure	Functional division	27	Yes	Dominant function division, hierarchy and rank codes indicate that officers are conditioned by structural antecedents stemming from the historical constitution of the military model of organizing.
	Hierarchy	28	Yes	
	Rank	14	Yes	
	Geography	0	No	
	Policies and rules	7	No	
Form	Technological	0	No	Dominant routine, experience and managerial dominance codes also reflect orthodox approaches to organizing. Experience code shows that officers associate their work histories with networks.
	Relationships	4	No	
	Seniority	4	No	
	Routine	22	Yes	
	Experience	10	Yes	
	Code of Silence	3	No	
	Career	5	No	
	Managerial Dominance	13	Yes	
	Work schedule	2	No	
Team	7	No		
Practices	Surrender	5	No	The most dominant practice codes are protection, seeking legitimacy and resistance. These codes suggest that officers use networks: for protection; to seek legitimacy for their viewpoints and desires; and, for resisting acts of power that are not in their best interests. Other interesting dominant codes link networks to surveillance, punishment and deception.
	Discipline	8	No	
	Blowing the whistle	3	No	
	Exercising voice	4	No	
	Resistance	32	Yes	
	Surveillance	20	Yes	
	Obedience/compliance	16	Yes	
	Payback	6	No	
	Reward	0	No	
	Collaboration	1	No	
	Authority	7	No	
	Punishment	21	Yes	
	Protection	44	Yes	
Deception	15	Yes		
Seeking legitimacy	35	Yes		
Effects	Undermines reform	58	Yes	The dominant effects codes indicate that networks are of a constraining nature and are perceived as working against the reform program. Other interesting links associate networks with fear and reactive policing.
	Reinforces reform	4	No	
	Constraint	25	Yes	
	Conflict	8	No	
	Reactive policing	12	No	
	Proactive policing	0	No	
	Fear	12	No	
	Frustration	3	No	
	Motivation	0	No	
De-motivation	4	No		

Table 3: An example of Dominant Intersecting Links and Quantitative Trends Between the Coding References for the Sub-Codes of the Structure, Forms, Practices and Effects Codes.

Research Question:

How do historically constituted forms of power effect the practice of dispersed leadership; and, do these effects reinforce or undermine the organization's to create a more democratic work environment?

Research Setting:

A Police Command, containing four police stations patrolling several suburbs of regional city. Detectives now members of operational team and report to a patrol team leader (divisional power usurped)

Data Collection:

Two year ethnographic study; researcher participated and observed everyday activities - travelled in patrol cars, attended meetings, conducting interviews, and informally talked with officers. Data from field-notes and taped interviews, were transcribed and entered into a computer software package designed for qualitative data analysis (Nvivo).

Data Coding

Each paragraph of text was open coded (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) with respect to the *a priori* concepts – “differentiation”, “domination”, “de-differentiation” or “democracy”.

Genealogy is concerned with the effects of practices (Haugaard, 1997; Kendall & Wickham, 1999) – each piece of text was also coded to indicate whether it represented a “structure”, constraining “form”, “practice” and/or “effect”.

Database Construction and Saturation

Data was disaggregated with respect to each of the *a priori* concepts; then re-aggregated (Eisenhardt, 1988; Struss & Corbin, 1990) to form two separate data sets. 1) Traditional Dataset: Combination of data coded with differentiation and domination power themes; 2) Dispersed Dataset: Combination of data coded with de-differentiation and democracy power themes. Comparison of frequency counts for each coding reference provides insight into the relative extent to which either traditional or dispersed approaches to power relationships are embedded in the words and deeds of officers.

Traditional power dataset subject to quantitative analysis; this was because the present study is concerned with how historically constituted forms constraint.

Data further saturated by extracting and aggregating the text examples within the traditional power dataset that are most frequently referenced by the forms node – forms a separate saturated dataset for the forms nodes.

This forms dataset was further saturated prior to qualitative analysis by aggregating those text examples within this dataset that represent the most frequently referenced sub-nodes from the practices and effects nodes; this creates a final dataset that contains text examples representing the dominant practices and effects that result from the organizations historically constituted forms of power (see figure 4). It is this final data set that is the focus of the qualitative analysis process.

Table 4: Methods, Instruments and Protocols

The operational framework designed to help systematize the qualitative interpretation of the final saturated dataset has five elements:

Taken for granted realities:

Taken for granted realities are underpinned by universalisms and essentialisms. A universalism is an assumed grand principle, law or totalizing truth (Lyotard, 1979; 1984); a historical account that privileges one relatively narrow point of view (Boje, 1995); or, a grand narrative that outlines how people think things "should" be. Totalizing truths ignore the micro complexities of local contexts and gloss over political disparities that provide an understanding of what actually occurs in everyday life. Essentialisms are similar, but are present at a more micro level as theories that appeal to a definitive or totalizing "truth" (Boje, 2001); they are the sense of reality that underpins the explanations people attribute to phenomena and appearances they talk about (Popper, 1969; Lyotard, 1979; 1984). Most importantly, both universal and essential viewpoints are imbued with assumptions about how power "should" be in social settings – alternatives views of power are not even recognized let alone considered.

Historical delineation of relationship:

Here, of interest is how the things officers say and do provide insight into the way relationships have been historically delineated with respect to power in their organization; how statements made within the organization produce differential subject positions (Martin, 1990; Boje, 1995) – ways of being and acting that people can and cannot take up (Kendall and Wickham, 2000). Central to this analysis is a duality search (Boje, 2001), a search for historically constituted hierarchical relationships in which one party is privileged and another is marginalized; relationships that are unproblematically accepted as the way things are (e.g. leaders and followers). Of concern is whether, over time, the practice of these relationships results in forms of disciplined practice that reflect traditional power relationships. That is, whether or not the nature of relationships between officers continues to privilege those who have traditionally held leadership positions despite the introduction of new structures and policies promoting otherwise.

Historical Decision Legitimacy:

The aim here is to see how the text identifies historical patterns in regard to "who" can make "what" decisions and in "which" contexts. Of interests, is whether these historical patterns contribute to the formation of unobtrusive structures of dominance (Weber, 1978; Clegg, 1975; 1989) in regard to how decisions are made in the organization. That is, whether or not the legitimacy of certain individuals and groups to make decisions in particular settings has, over time, become taken for granted.

The ordering of statements:

An operational example of an ordering of statements would be the existence of common discourse patterns, in regard to the exercise of power, across functional and hierarchical boundaries of an organization (Kendall and Wickham, 1999). For example, if instructional and/or disciplinary statements are mirrored at each level of the organizations hierarchy, a pervading management discourse may exist. Of interest, is how this discourse reflects a particular flow or circuit of power (Clegg, 1989) through the organization; whether the discourse privileges certain actors and practices at the expense of others; and whether, and if how, the nature of the discourse works for or against the organization's leadership reform agenda.

The boundaries of discursive action:

Here, how actors are constrained by discursive boundaries – unobtrusive boundaries that outline the territories or domains in which officers may and may not act (Kendall and Wickham, 1999). Charting these boundaries will require the analysis of data that provides examples of situations in which officers feel comfortable with exercising their "voice" and, where others consider their voice to be legitimate. The organization's structure, policies and procedures, architectural features and social arrangements can also provide insight to the nature of these boundaries (Haugaard, 1997).

Table 5: Operational framework to help systematize qualitative analysis

Speaker/Actor	Statement	Textual deconstruction
Duty Officer (Reform coordinator)	And it does! If the Sergeant can't take you head on because you are not afraid to take the Sergeant head on, the Sergeant will network with his foot soldiers, he will load the bullets and they will fire them. And that's when you see complaints go in, ... where you see someone being dragged over the coals for a minor managerial thing that they've done, nothing investigated, isolate them ... our system is perfect for it, and you can see that what happens at Command level with isolation, complaint initiation, bastardisation, destruction of character through rumor and innuendo and through the network process ... the informal rules are very powerful, very, very powerful. You breach those rules and you are tainted for the rest of your service.	<p><u>Taken for granted reality</u>: Old time Sergeants "should" be obeyed.</p> <p><u>Historical delineation of relationships</u>: Dualisms based on rank, seniority and operational experience. Higher ranked officers, those with seniority and those with operational experience hold power in their relationships.</p> <p><u>Historical decision legitimacy</u>: Old time Sergeants are legitimate decision makers.</p> <p><u>Ordering of statements</u>: System legitimates punishment for disobedience throughout organization – punishment accepted as "the done thing".</p> <p><u>Boundaries of discursive action</u>: If you cross decision and relationship boundaries you can expect retaliation. Networks protect their decision and relationship boundaries by punishing those who breach them.</p>
Team Leader 1	<p>The CI [Detective networks] ... They attack the individual ... there is one Sergeant that has moved from the CI area, to general duties at the moment, the back biting and whinging and innuendo that occurs from his own people, even though he wouldn't know it. He still thinks he is a part of it, respect and what not. They certainly dig the knife in but, no, that's like, a solidarity type of thing. It is like, they are abandoning our ship, and they are very concerned about that.</p> <p>[The Networkers get their legitimacy from] rank and time in the area, and things he would have done for people in the past, help people out, you know ... I think the circles and networks ... you can see in what is left, strong networks in the whole makeup, XXXX [the Command's] old Patrol structure. You can see it, you know when you are talking to a person where their allegiances lie, and the reasons for those allegiances is safety and security. They know if they get in good with that person, that person is in a position where they could look after them.</p>	<p><u>Taken for granted reality</u>: Detectives are naturally superior to other officers.</p> <p><u>Historical delineation of relationships</u>: Dualistic relationship between Detectives and other officers. Detectives are specialist detectives who use scientific principles and technology in their work. The historical practice of superiority based on their specialist status has resulted in their superiority in relationships being taken for granted.</p> <p><u>Historical decision legitimacy</u>: Detectives take charge at crime scenes. Detective only work on serious crime. Detectives do a specialist detectives course. Detectives do not work shift work.</p> <p><u>Ordering of statements</u>: Those who leave the network should be punished.</p> <p><u>Boundaries of discursive action</u>: The reason for network allegiances is safety and security. If you move out of the network not only do you no longer belong to the network, you will be marginalized, ridiculed and no longer trusted.</p>

Table 6: Examples of Text Analysis Tables

Speaker/Actor	Statement	Textual deconstruction
Senior Officer (Organization Headquarters reform unit)	The need to fit in, in [this type of] service is higher than the need to fit in, in a University, and therefore, fitting in demands self-censorship from a very early age ... Because ... too much lateral thought leads to challenge, leads to isolation. You have to demonstrate your credibility to fit in to a network. And I think that this has got less to do with policing, incidentally, then to do with anti-intellectual environments, which [this type of organization] is. It is an environment in which ideas are not honoured. (Document 'CMSU' Paragraphs 34-40)	<p><u>Taken for granted reality</u>: One must fit with the existing system and culture. Because we (organization's officers) are different, solidarity is the key to our success. The way things are is the way things should be. Practice is more valuable than theory.</p> <p><u>Historical delineation of relationships</u>: Dualistic relationship between officers and other people. [The organization's officers] are practitioners not theorists. You are either with us or against us. You either fit or you do not.</p> <p><u>Historical decision legitimacy</u>: Those who do not fit have no voice in decision making.</p> <p><u>Ordering of statements</u>: Isolate those who do not fit.</p> <p><u>Boundaries of discursive action</u>: If you challenge the networks way of seeing and doing you risk isolation and marginalization.</p>
Senior Officer (Business Manager of Local Area Command)	They are not scared of them [management] the way they are scared of other people in the workplace. [Interviewer] What is the basis of this fear?	<p><u>Taken for granted reality</u>: Detectives are superior.</p> <p><u>Historical delineation of relationships</u>: Dualistic relationship between Detectives and other officers.</p>
During interview	Generations of bastardization, generations of insults, generations of ... "you're in uniform - we'll take it from here", "thanks - you do all the leg work and I will sign it off and get the glory" [refers to detectives network]. I mean, bastardization is part of the [the organization's culture].	<p><u>Historical decision legitimacy</u>: Detectives have higher legitimacy in decision making than general duties officers.</p> <p><u>Ordering of statements</u>: Detectives, while not formally sanctioned to do so, have the power to issue threats, punish and discipline other officers. Fear constitutes the relationship between detectives and other officers.</p>
General Duties Officer	That's right. They really ... that's was a cultural thing and I believe one of the biggest impediments to team aligning the CI [having detectives report to General Duties Team Leaders] was the fear factor in the general duties, of the detectives. They are absolutely scared of them, scared of been bastardized, scared of been harassed, intimidated ... all those sort of things. ('S_TAPE_050500',Section 0, Paragraphs 336-348).	<p><u>Boundaries of discursive action</u>: Cross/challenge the detective network's boundary and you can expect to be punished.</p>

Table 6: Continued