Title
Emphasising Ethnographic Participation in Policing Simulations

Abstract
Participation in simulation-based training events for research challenges the traditional ethnographic participant-observation dichotomy. Training for senior officers in Police Scotland emphasises equality and diversity awareness by utilising immersive simulated learning techniques. This immersive simulation engages with participants by replicating critical incidents and policing practices characterised by uncertainty, high-stress, tension and time-pressures. Drawing upon Alison et al., (2013) assertion that simulation-based training enhances researchers understanding of social, organisational and cultural contexts of policing, it is argued that simulation-based training has value for ethnographic research by mirroring the naturalistic occupational environment. The researcher was therefore able to observe cultural processes among officers’ similar to real-life scenarios.

The researcher’s presence during the training exercises –‘being there’-- was enriched by directly contributing to the training programme as an external, non-police advisor. The emphasis on the researcher’s role as an active participant in the training programme challenges the conventional notion of passive, neutral ethnographic participant-observation. Active participation also provides a solution to the challenges of researching counter-narratives in a hierarchal institution, traditionally renowned for its blue code of silence by enabling the researcher the embeddedness to develop an extensive and prolonged rapport with officers; bridging the gap between the researcher’s outsider and insider status. It is argued that the simultaneous distance and closeness of this position enhanced the ethnographic fieldwork and subsequently illuminated the fictitious façade of valuing equality and diversity in Police Scotland.

Coupled with in-depth interviews, the gender ‘performativity’ of officers (Chan, Doran & Marel, 2010) illustrates the patriarchal nature of Scottish policing and the continual privileged status afforded to hegemonic masculinity. Women in policing are devalued through a ‘double-downer discourse’ whereby their gender is used to justify both their successes and failures. Rhetoric of the ‘best candidate’ is employed to obscure women’s disadvantage and men’s advantage during the promotion process, contesting the gender-neutrality of meritocracy. Together these findings question whether Police Scotland’s values of integrity, fairness and respect play out internally. Findings illustrate the value of emphasising active participation in ethnographic studies of policing when researching tacit aspects of police culture that officers are reluctant, or find problematic, to articulate.