

**ANSWERING (OR NOT ANSWERING) THE CALL:
YOUNG INDIVIDUALS' ATTITUDES TOWARD POLICING CAREERS**

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Abstract

In the context of a drastic decline in recruitment to police agencies across Western democratic nations, the thesis examined the nature of young individuals' current attitudes towards law enforcement careers. In addition, the study examined how these nuances and characteristics differed across policing careers in Canada generally and the RCMP specifically. Participants ($N = 230$) were asked to answer questions regarding their career aspirations and whether they planned on applying to a law enforcement agency upon completion of their degree. Afterwards, participants were asked to answer questions on various scales when thinking about a policing career in general versus one with the RCMP specifically. These scales examined concepts such as overall job interest and career outlook, apprehension about work-life balance, social disapproval, and mentoring. Some of the results were consistent with previous literature, indicating that men were more interested in a law enforcement career than women, and that the reputation and perspective of a police organization were barriers for some participants when considering a career in law enforcement. However, there were unique findings regarding mentoring, work-life balance, and the lack of alternative job opportunities, which are discussed. Specifically, participants who said they were going to apply and those who said they were unsure about pursuing a career in law enforcement reported lacking access to mentorship opportunities, which would have been impactful on their decisions. Younger individuals, participants not pursuing a criminology degree, and those who indicated they were not planning to pursue a career in law enforcement reported greater apprehension about work-life balance. Lastly, those who indicated they were not going to apply identified a lack of other job alternatives as an influential factor. This means they would consider joining a law enforcement agency if they could not secure employment elsewhere. This is true for policing in general and for the RCMP

specifically. Overall, this thesis makes a significant contribution to the literature and provides new insights into how young individuals currently perceive policing careers. In addition, while not the primary objective of this analytic thesis, the results point to various policy interventions that could encourage youth recruitment.

Keywords: policing careers, law enforcement careers, young individuals' attitudes, work-life balance, mentoring, recruitment crisis

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Chapter I: Introduction

Over the past few decades, there has been a drastic reduction in recruitment to police agencies – which police management defines as a “crisis” - across Western democratic nations, including the United States, England, Australia, and Canada. This crisis has become particularly evident in recent years amid growing discussions surrounding defunding the police, which are rooted in the belief that policing is used as a means of control and punishment to uphold the dominant social order (Tchoukleva et al., 2020). Over time, funding has been poured into policing for the ostensible reasons of “fighting the war on crime” and upholding the ideal that police keep community members safe (Tchoukleva et al., 2020). However, recent events around the death of BIPOC individuals at the hands of police have brought renewed attention to the flaws in the system for policing (Tchoukleva et al., 2020). The Defund the Police movement encompasses various streams, each focusing on distinct principles. For example, abolitionists want to eliminate the police budget entirely while restructuring and reconceptualizing public safety (Ontario Federation of Labour, 2025; Tchoukleva et al., 2020). Instead of removing police budgets entirely, others seek to reduce them while investing in alternative community safety measures, such as anti-homelessness initiatives, drug rehabilitation, and affordable housing (Ontario Federation of Labour, 2025; Tchoukleva et al., 2020). Another stream embedded within the Defund the Police movement is Black Lives Matter, which originated in the United States. As a result of police violence, which took the lives of several Black Americans, various individuals and organized movements have started to speak out against the excessive violence that individuals of colour experience from police officers (Defund the Police, 2025; Movement for Black Lives, n.d.). Canada has experienced similar movements due to the killing of Black, Indigenous and other racialized individuals at the hands of the police (Ontario Federation of

Labour, 2025). As a result, these movements in Canada are focused on the anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism that is evident within policing (Ontario Federation of Labour, 2025).

As a partial result of these movements, staffing levels at police organizations around the world are consistently below target, and overall interest in policing careers appears to be on a steady decline (Tunney, 2018; Tunney, 2023). Within Canada, the same issues prevail. Numerous law enforcement agencies are experiencing a “recruitment crisis” due to declining applicant numbers (Freeze, 2023b; Tunney, 2023). Among Canada's police organizations, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) is experiencing this crisis to a greater extent (Angus Reid Institute, 2020a; Ruddell, 2022). This is causing the organization to operate at significantly reduced staffing levels. In response to the significant decline in applicants to policing careers, considerable research has been conducted to find ways to improve recruitment. However, to analyze the phenomenon in a critical social science manner, it is essential to examine and quantify individuals' attitudes towards policing careers, as well as the factors driving shifts in these attitudes. While research pertaining to perceptions of policing careers has been identified in the existing literature, it remains incomplete. A large portion of previous research on this subject has been conducted on Caucasian men, racialized individuals, and women (Foley et al., 2008; Meagher & Yentes, 1986; Raganella & White, 2004; Schuck, 2020) using data collected mainly in the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia. However, far less research has been conducted on the attitudes and resistance of young individuals in Canada, a gap in the literature that warrants further exploration. As a result, this thesis aims to analyze trends among young individuals in Canada by examining university-aged students considering a career in policing.

Thesis Overview

Chapter II begins by briefly discussing public perceptions of the police, particularly highlighting how views of law enforcement institutions have become more negative over recent decades. I highlight how the same trends are evident within law enforcement agencies in Canada, with a particularly significant impact on the RCMP. After discussing the decline in support for policing institutions across Western democratic countries, I consider various reasons for this shift. Firstly, I examine police culture and how a lack of change over the past century could be a contributing factor. I particularly highlight the experiences of racialized individuals and women in law enforcement careers and some of the challenges they face. Secondly, I discuss problems with recruitment by highlighting the recruitment crisis which has occurred in recent decades and the declining applicant pool. I then discuss barriers that specific individuals and groups might experience when trying to join the police. Lastly, I discuss problems with training protocols, which might be contributing to a shift in how individuals view the police. After discussing various causes of this shift, I move on to highlight the reasons individuals are motivated to pursue careers in policing. I compare literature on multiple groups, such as Caucasian men, women, racialized individuals, and members of the LGBTQ community. After discussing the literature on shifting attitudes towards policing and what drives them, I examine various theoretical concepts, including Social Representation Theory and the concept of social embeddedness, to better understand the hesitancy many young individuals experience regarding careers in law enforcement. The chapter concludes by discussing the present study and the research questions that will be explored.

Chapter III discusses the methodological approach and quantitative research design used to explore young individuals' attitudes towards policing careers. The demographics of the

participant pool are presented, along with a discussion of the data-collection materials. The chapter concludes by providing a description of the procedure. In Chapter IV, the study results are presented, highlighting perceptions and attitudes towards policing careers and potential causes of these attitudes. Comparisons are made between results focusing on general policing and those focusing on the RCMP specifically. In addition, differences among gender, age, race/ethnicity, program, and program year are discussed. In Chapter V, the significance of the findings is discussed and analyzed in relation to the research questions. Various surprising findings are highlighted. Notably, participants who stated they were going to apply and those who were unsure/ might apply to policing careers indicated an interest in greater mentorship and opportunities to learn about this type of role before following through on applications. Another surprising finding highlighted is that participants who stated they were not going to apply to a policing agency identified a lack of other job alternatives as a highly influential factor. This means they would consider applying to a law enforcement agency if they could not secure employment elsewhere. This is true when looking at policing in Canada generally and the RCMP specifically. Other surprising findings include the reputation and perspectives of policing, which were identified as a significant barrier for certain participants, as well as concerns about work-life balance. Afterwards, the results are considered using Social Representation Theory and social embeddedness. In addition, although it is not the objective of this thesis, numerous policy implications that might encourage youth recruitment are discussed. Lastly, Chapter VI summarizes the findings and discusses the significance of the present study for the broader context of attitudes towards law enforcement careers. The limitations of the current study are mentioned along with potential avenues for further research.

Chapter II: Problematic Perceptions and Enduring Recruitment Challenges

In this chapter, I begin by discussing the shift observed in how individuals view police institutions. After highlighting the changes on a global scale, I briefly discuss this shift from a Canadian perspective, with a special focus on the decline in public perceptions of the RCMP. After providing this contextual background, I discuss numerous potential reasons for these changes in perspective. Police culture and the lack of change over recent decades are discussed, along with how this has impacted individuals' experiences in policing careers. Next, I highlight problems with recruitment and discuss the recruitment crisis and its resulting decline in the applicant pool in more detail. This leads to a discussion of barriers that individuals report experiencing when joining law enforcement institutions. Lastly, I discuss problems with training protocols that may be contributing to the shift in views regarding police careers. After discussing potential reasons for this shift, I highlight motivations for pursuing a career in policing, with an emphasis on racialized and other non-heteronormative groups. Then, I move on to discuss various theoretical concepts that can be used to better understand young individuals' attitudes and resistance to pursuing policing careers. I discuss Social Representation Theory and the concept of social embeddedness. Finally, I provide details of the current study, including my research questions and objectives.

Shifts in How People View the Police

Since the origin of modern police institutions, there have been variations in how individuals view police officers and their duties. This is a global phenomenon, seen explicitly in many Western democratic countries. Recently, a negative shift has been observed worldwide, resulting in a decline in public support for the police (Ruddell, 2022). Surveys conducted in the

United Kingdom and the United States show a decline in confidence and satisfaction with the police and their responsibilities. A survey conducted in London, England, in March 2019 showed that 71% of individuals expressed confidence in the police. However, this figure dropped to 59% in December 2021 after the death of George Floyd at the hands of a Minneapolis police officer in the United States in early 2020, as well as the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic (Ruddell, 2022). Within the United States, a survey showed that the proportion of individuals expressing a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in the police dropped from 53% in 2019 to 48% in 2020 (Brenan, 2021; Ruddell, 2022). These trends coincide with the Defund the Police movement, which became prevalent after the death of George Floyd. In addition to the United States, Canada has also demonstrated a significant increase in support for defunding the police (Angus Reid Institute, 2020b; Ruddell, 2022), resulting in an overall decline in support for the police.

Policing in Canada

Within Canada, data indicate a decline in how individuals perceive policing institutions. Studies conducted in the late 1970s reveal that Canadian citizens held relatively positive views of the police (Hylton et al., 1979; Klein et al., 1978). In 1999, Statistics Canada conducted a survey in which 26,000 individuals from across 10 provinces were asked about their thoughts on the criminal justice system (Tufts, 2000). The results of this survey revealed that Canadians were generally confident in the police, with 66% believing the police were approachable and 62% believing the police ensured citizens' safety (Tufts, 2000). In contrast, between 4% and 9% of survey respondents felt that the police were doing a poor job. Statistics Canada conducted the same survey in 2019 and found varying results. Around 41% of respondents reported having a great deal of confidence in the police, with 49% reporting they had some confidence (Ibrahim, 2020). While there was a slight decline in overall support for the police between the Statistics

Canada reports conducted in 1999 and 2019, a report from the Angus Reid Institute found that there has been a steady decrease since 2014 (Angus Reid Institute, 2020a; Ruddell, 2022). Studies suggest that support for the police declined further after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Defund the Police movement in 2020 (Ibrahim, 2020; Ruddell, 2022; Ruddell & Jones, 2022). Thirty-six thousand Canadians took part in a crowdsourcing initiative on the impact of COVID-19 and discrimination. 23% of the respondents reported having low trust in the police (Ibrahim, 2020; Statistics Canada, 2020). Overall, numerous sources highlight a significant decline in support for police institutions in Canada over recent years.

When comparing policing institutions to other criminal justice agencies, similar findings are present. The 1999 survey from Statistics Canada revealed that Canadians were more confident in their local police agencies than in the courts, lawyers, judges, and parole boards (Tufts, 2000). Between 13% and 21% of the population felt that the court system was doing a good job of determining whether an accused was guilty, helping the victim, and providing justice quickly (Tufts, 2000). Similarly, 26% of respondents felt that the prison system did a good job of supervising and controlling prisoners (Tufts, 2000). The 2019 survey from Statistics Canada revealed a decline in perceptions, with 10-19% of the population feeling the court system was doing a good job of determining guilt, helping victims, and providing justice quickly. A similar report found that support for the RCMP, local police forces, and the court system has declined slightly from 2016 to the present day (Angus Reid Institute, 2020a). Overall, the decline in support for other criminal justice agencies appears similar to that for policing institutions.

In addition to data highlighting the decline across Canada as a whole, there is further support for the decline observed among policing institutions in various cities and provinces. Individuals living in Ottawa, Ontario, who said the Ottawa Police Service was doing a good or

excellent job declined from 63% in 2020 to 60% in 2021 (Advanis Research, 2021; Ruddell, 2022). In Saskatchewan, individuals ranking the Regina Police Service as very good to excellent dropped from 79% in 2019 to 70% in 2021 (Ruddell, 2022; Ruddell & Jones, 2022). In addition, there was a drop from 93% in 2017 to 87% in 2021 regarding overall satisfaction with the Saskatoon Police Service (Ruddell, 2022; Saskatoon Police Service, 2021). In Alberta, individuals rating the overall job of policing in Edmonton as good or excellent dropped from 64% in 2020 to 57% in 2021 (Advanic Research, 2021; Ruddell, 2022). Similar trends were found regarding policing in British Columbia. Satisfaction with the Victoria Police Service decreased from 86% in 2020 to 82% in 2021 (Ruddell, 2022). Satisfaction among Vancouver residents dropped by 16% between 2019 and 2021 (City of Vancouver, 2021; Ruddell, 2022). In Surrey¹, the percentage of respondents who rated the RCMP as very or somewhat favourable dropped from 83% in 2020 to 77% in 2021 (Pollara Strategic Insights, 2021; Ruddell, 2022). Overall, the RCMP observed similar trends in public satisfaction, with 62% reporting satisfaction in 2021, down from 72% in 2020. 60% of individuals reported public trust and confidence in the RCMP in 2021, down from 69% in 2020 (Ruddell, 2022). The decline in support for the RCMP seems more pronounced than that for other police organizations in Canada. As the RCMP is Canada's long-standing national police force, it is essential to consider what aspects of this police institution are contributing to a more significant shift in how individuals perceive the police.

¹ Until recently, Surrey was policed solely by the RCMP. However, in 2018, the city voted to establish a municipal police service and in 2020, the Surrey Police Service (SPS) was created. Phase one of the transition began in 2021, with the first deployment of sworn officers and civilian staff. The SPS became the official police of jurisdiction on November 29, 2024. However, the RCMP Surrey Provincial Operations Support Unit will continue to provide support until the SPS is fully established which is estimated to occur in 2027 (Surrey Police Service, n.d.).

Royal Canadian Mounted Police

The RCMP has an enduring history which dates to 1873, a few years after the formation of Canada. Originally known as the North-West Mounted Police, the organization played a significant role in “settling the West and developing the North” (RCMP Reform Implementation Council, 2010, p. 3). Since its inception in 1873, the RCMP has grown enormously. According to the NSICOP (2023) report, the most recent count indicates that the RCMP comprises approximately 30,000 employees, with 18,600 being uniformed officers and 10,400 being civilian staff members or public servants. The RCMP has grown into a modern police force with three core mandates: Specialized Policing Services, Contract and Indigenous Policing and Federal Policing (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2021). The contract and Indigenous policing mandate dominate the organizational structure as the RCMP works to provide policing services to every province and territory in Canada, except Ontario and Quebec (NSICOP, 2023; Task Force on Governance and Cultural Change in the RCMP, 2007). To put this mandate into perspective, the RCMP provides policing services at both the provincial and municipal levels, through over 700 detachments, 150 communities, and 600 Indigenous communities across Canada (NSICOP, 2023; Task Force on Governance and Cultural Change in the RCMP, 2007). In addition to the vital work carried out via the contract and Indigenous policing mandate, the Canadian government also relies heavily upon the RCMP to perform essential federal duties regarding crimes such as terrorism, drug enforcement, organized crime, and economic crimes, among others (Lunney, 2012; RCMP Reform Implementation Council, 2010; Kirley, 2012). When combining the tasks involved in the federal policing mandate with those of the other two mandates, it is evident that the RCMP is responsible for successfully executing a significant number of tasks aimed at protecting Canadians' safety, both on a day-to-day basis and on an

international scale. The sheer number of tasks the RCMP is responsible for has been a source of great concern. Individuals are suggesting that the organization faces various structural problems and lacks a clear mission, which would significantly impact the safety and national security of Canadians (Lunney, 2012).

The RCMP's organizational structure, shaped by its paramilitary history, influences how it carries out government-mandated responsibilities, manages officers, and recruits and trains new members. However, the influence of this paramilitary history, specifically the training requirements and organizational structure, now appears to be a deterrent to the RCMP's ability to attract sufficient applicants amid a shrinking labour pool (NSICOP, 2023; Skaggs et al., 2022). Over time, a lack of recruitment will be detrimental to the well-functioning of the RCMP (and the working experience of its members and the communities they serve), as the Mounties try to execute tasks on a municipal, provincial and national level amid a rapidly evolving landscape of crime (Orrick, 2008; Tumilty, 2023; Wilson et al., 2010a). Despite efforts made to boost recruitment, the RCMP continues to experience a decline in applicants (Wilson et al., 2010a). Thus, it is evident that the current recruitment model present within the RCMP's organizational structure is not sufficiently drawing from desired groups such as women, racialized individuals and young individuals. As a result, in addition to using Canada as the context for examining my research questions, this thesis also aims to compare other policing institutions, specifically with the RCMP.

Possible Reasons for this Shift

The previous sections discussed a global shift in how individuals view the police, with particular emphasis on developments over the past decade. This shift does not have a single explanation, nor is it caused by a single event. There are various reasons why individuals have,

most recently, developed a more negative view of police institutions. Some of these reasons are elaborated on below.

Police Culture & Lack of Changes

Police culture is a unique and challenging phenomenon (Sargeant et al., 2017). Silvestri (2017) points out that the sheer volume of research on police culture should serve as a reminder of the importance of understanding its impacts on protecting citizens' safety and security. The study of police culture emerged from an ethnographic inquiry into police work. This inquiry revealed a layer of informal and occupational standards within the existing hierarchical structure of police organizations (Cain, 1973; Holdaway, 1983; Manning, 1977). As such, police culture evolved as a system of values passed down from one generation of police officers to the next (Hepburn et al., 2022). Over time, policing was associated with a culture of masculinity, assertiveness, strength, and bravery (Crank, 2004; Loftus, 2009; Waddington, 1999). Chan (1996), who has conducted extensive research on police culture and its evolution, noted that when considering police culture, it is important to acknowledge the existence of multiple subcultures. This aligns with Gutschmidt and Vera's (2020) research on the emergence of subcultures within an organization. Chan (1997) acknowledges that a police force's organizational culture varies depending on numerous factors, including how the law enforcement sector is experienced, interpreted, and acted upon. Thus, it is essential to consider the broader political and social context when examining police culture (O'Neill, 2016).

While there is extensive research on the topic, scholars take varying viewpoints when considering the advantages and disadvantages of police culture in its current state (Silvestri, 2017). From one perspective, police culture is essential to the survival of police officers as they work in a field that is inherently dangerous and unpredictable (Chan, 1996). However, police

culture is also blamed for the negative attributes commonly associated with law enforcement, such as cynicism, misconduct, misogyny, and racism (Chan, 1996; Sargeant et al., 2017). In Queensland, Australia, negative police culture was deemed responsible for police misconduct and identified as a major obstacle to successful reform (Chan, 1996). In addition to the various contradictory research on the benefits of police culture within law enforcement, there is a substantial number of critiques suggesting that police culture is oversimplistic (Silvestri, 2017). It was initially believed that police culture is homogenous and stable across time (Paesen et al., 2019). However, Chan (1996) critiques this view, arguing that the literature on police culture fails to account for differences within and between police agencies, leaving little room for cultural change and reform. In addition, more recent literature on the subject highlights the importance of acknowledging variation within police departments (Paesen et al., 2019). As a result, Chan (1996) developed a new framework for understanding police culture, which not only recognizes variations within this organizational culture but also considers the social and political context of police work. As law enforcement priorities continue to evolve in response to the changing social climate, it is essential to consider how police culture must also adapt to meet these new challenges.

Chan (1996) suggests that one of the main reasons for the growing interest in police culture in recent years is concerns over its impediment to meaningful police reform. For example, in their research on organizational change in a New Zealand police force, Gardner (2015) found that the police continue to struggle with the idea of police reform and creating change within the organization. Sargeant et al. (2017) contribute to this by suggesting that the very culture that allows police officers to work in such unique, high-pressure environments is also a barrier to implementing any degree of positive organizational change. Despite the

challenges of trying to change police culture, there have been numerous attempts, both successful and unsuccessful, seen by various police agencies around the world. However, when analyzing police agencies in Canada, Rigaux and Cunningham (2020) found that progress is slow. Research on changes in police organizational culture indicates that there are many reasons why a police agency might seek to change. Some agencies modify their organizational structures due to budgetary constraints, while others implement reform strategies to keep pace with technological advances, thereby remaining an effective and modern police force (Gardner, 2015). Thompson and Payne (2019) contribute to this literature by examining the resistance encountered when police agencies engage in organizational change. A primary form of resistance comes from the 'stubbornness' of police culture itself. However, resistance can also be seen through perceived threats to the existing organizational structure from both frontline employees and mid-level management (Gardner, 2015). Ultimately, Chan (1996) argues that the current literature on police culture is limited, which thereby inhibits any discussion on how to positively affect change within police organizations.

Despite the difficulties of changing police culture, Chan (1996) argues that it is possible, highlighting the factors and elements that vary across police organizations. Ensuring effective police leadership is a crucial strategy for achieving positive police reform (Rigaux & Cunningham, 2020). Police leadership can be viewed in two ways. Firstly, by fostering a leadership culture that promotes diversity, and secondly, by changing the leadership style to better engage with police culture and reform (Rigaux & Cunningham, 2020). Regarding the RCMP, there has been a significant decline in leadership's confidence to implement the changes necessary to promote a positive work environment and protect Canadians' safety (McPhail, 2017). This decline in confidence can be closely tied to the paramilitary style of leadership that

characterizes some police organizations, such as the RCMP. Police organizations that embody this type of organizational structure are described as having a hierarchy which promotes and sustains the values of those in power by attracting and rewarding groups and leaders who value higher levels of social dominance (Rigaux & Cunningham, 2020). In addition to ensuring effective leadership, police reform can also be achieved through strategies that improve recruitment techniques and training protocols (Silvestri, 2017).

Experiences in Policing. As police culture is known for being oriented towards Caucasian men due to its association with masculinity and assertiveness (Crank, 2004; Loftus, 2009; Waddington, 1999), members of less socially powerful groups may have different experiences with careers in law enforcement. Therefore, it is crucial to examine the experiences of marginalized individuals who pursue careers in policing. Research suggests that female, racialized, and non-heteronormative officers might be seen as ‘outsiders’ in the police world (Zempi, 2020). Zempi (2020) conducted a study in which police officers in the United Kingdom were interviewed about their experiences in law enforcement. Participants reported being targeted for their perceived ‘difference,’ whether that be evident through incidents of sexism, racism, or homophobia (Zempi, 2020). Participants in this study also reported experiencing discrimination based on their religion, culture, disability and/ or physical appearance. Paul and Birzer (2017) add to the literature by stating that racialized police officers frequently experience racial profiling and are subjected to racial stereotypes when out of uniform. Police officers who are members of the LGBTQ community also face discrimination on the job. However, the experiences of gay men are notably different from those of lesbian women. Colvin (2015) conducted a study examining the work environment of gay and lesbian police officers in the United Kingdom. The authors found that both men and women in the LGBTQ community

struggled when it came to joining or transferring to a police force. However, men reported greater discrimination compared to women in areas such as work schedules, promotions, and postings. For lesbian police officers, there was less discrimination reported in areas such as postings, training, and discipline. Colvin (2015) attributes the discrimination experienced by gay men to an increase in negative stereotyping while suggesting that lesbian women experience positive stereotyping. Colvin (2012) suggests these experiences are based on the weak, feminine stereotypes associated with gay men and the masculine, tough stereotypes associated with lesbian women.

The experiences of female police officers are more thoroughly researched and vary depending on the aspect of police work examined. A study conducted in Northern Ireland found that female members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC)² felt they could perform police work as well as their male colleagues. However, the women acknowledged that their lack of physical strength was a slight disadvantage for dealing with aspects that required these skills, such as rioters or males resisting arrest (Southern, 2018). The opposite was also found true, that female police officers were better suited for specific tasks, such as interacting with sexual assault victims. The female officers in the RUC believed that certain tasks were better suited to certain genders (Southern, 2018). A study conducted in the United States took a different approach to researching women's experiences in policing, examining the dynamics between male and female officers. All females interviewed identified at least one instance of sexual harassment, discrimination or disrespect which had an impact on their acceptance in the field (Rabe-Hemp, 2008). Interestingly, most participants suggested that these instances occurred early in their

² The Royal Ulster Constabulary was established as the police force for Northern Ireland in 1922 until it transitioned to the Police Service of Northern Ireland in 2001 (Police Service of Northern Ireland, n.d.).

careers and decreased in frequency after they gained more experience. However, the female police officers in this study also stated that acceptance had to be renegotiated throughout their careers, particularly with the introduction of new colleagues or with movement between police agencies (Rabe-Hemp, 2008). Despite the discrimination experienced by female officers, there is also research which suggests that police culture is becoming more accepting of female police officers (Rabe-Hemp, 2008). Women, at least in some jurisdictions, are reporting a weakened “boys club” attitude and a perceived ability to achieve higher-ranking positions (Rabe-Hemp, 2008). Overall, the research suggests that female, racialized, and non-heteronormative police officers face difficulties throughout their careers in law enforcement, which are brought on by the stereotypical masculine characteristics associated with police culture.

Problems with Recruitment

Another possible reason for the shift in people’s views of the police relates to recruitment. Within policing, recruitment is an exact process that targets a specific group of individuals. Historically, recruitment strategies have targeted Caucasian men primarily due to societal patterns governed by traditional gender norms (Cordner & Cordner, 2011). However, recent research on recruitment practices in policing suggests that implementing techniques aimed at other targeted groups could be beneficial (Cordner & Cordner, 2011). This would, in theory, allow for the creation of a more heterogeneous police force which is representative of the community (Jain, 1987; Jain et al., 2008; Suriya, 1993; Wortley et al., 1996). By changing recruitment strategies, it is assumed that a shift in police culture will also occur, involving a breakdown of racial prejudices (Rigaux & Cunningham, 2020). However, many doubt the efficacy of such strategies (Ely & Thomas, 2001). Many police organizations worldwide have been under pressure to implement more targeted recruitment strategies to create more diverse

police services (Rossler et al., 2020). However, the majority of recruitment practices are not targeted towards specific groups such as women, racialized individuals and members of the LGBTQ community, which is why police culture has not seen a more significant shift (Giwa et al., 2022; Rigaux & Cunningham, 2020). Data from 2022 in Canada suggests that women account for 22% of police officers, with visible minorities accounting for 8% and Indigenous individuals accounting for 4% (Giwa et al., 2022). While these numbers do appear to be an increase compared to data from the previous century, recruitment efforts fall short of ensuring law enforcement organizations are representative of society. Thus, recruitment processes need to be re-engineered to specifically attract minority groups (Tunney, 2018). By continuing to increase recruitment of racialized individuals, there is the potential for law enforcement agencies to see a positive, recurrent impact long into the future. Individuals, such as women, racialized individuals and members of the LGBTQ community, are more likely to join a police force when they see individuals they identify with currently working in the force (Vermeer et al., 2020). Despite the benefits of targeting specific groups through recruitment practices, this process has been met with significant challenges in Canada and other countries (Vermeer et al., 2020).

Recruitment Crisis and the Declining Applicant Pool. Police agencies in Canada, as well as globally, are experiencing a significant shortage of resources, which impacts the execution of various duties and responsibilities (NSICOP, 2023). Most prominently, the resource deficit is evident through a shortage of personnel and uniformed officers. Within the RCMP specifically, a 2007 report found that every detachment the authors visited was experiencing vacancy rates, often to the magnitude of 25-30% (Task Force on Governance and Cultural Change in the RCMP, 2007). While this issue may not appear to have significant consequences, these vacancies can have detrimental effects on the lives of citizens living in these jurisdictions.

The 2020 mass shooting in Nova Scotia, Canada³, is a recent example of the severity of understaffed police agencies around the country (Mass Casualty Commission [MCC]; 2023). Reports have indicated that the county where the shooting took place was six officers short of meeting minimum standards in the year leading up to the shooting (Hill, 2022; Tutton, 2022). As a result, police officers could not engage in “proactive policing,” which refers to times when officers are not directly responding to or following up on active incidents (Hill, 2022; Tutton, 2022). Because of understaffing, the police in this county did not have the time or sufficient resources to target problem areas or focus on initiatives to reduce crime, which might have made a difference in this shooting (Hill, 2022; Tutton, 2022). According to various data sources, the number of police personnel has been in steady decline in recent years, with no evidence that this trend will change (Freeze, 2023a; Freeze, 2023b; NSICOP, 2023). This steady decline in law enforcement personnel can be attributed to several factors. In their research on police recruitment, Wilson et al. (2010b) suggest that the reason may be retirement, the inability to retain officers, a lack of recruitment, and the reallocation of personnel. Further data states that police agencies have been struggling to recruit the required number of employees with the appropriate experience and skills (NSICOP, 2023). Despite the reasons for the lack of personnel, research is consistent in its concern that various police agencies, especially the RCMP, lack the capacity to execute their duties effectively (Task Force on Governance and Cultural Change in the RCMP, 2007; Wilson & Grammich, 2009).

As recruitment to law enforcement has been an issue for a long time, substantial research has examined why there is a recruitment crisis. One proposed cause of the recruitment crisis is

³ In April 2020, Nova Scotia fell victim to the most lethal mass shooting in Canadian civilian history. Over the course of 13 hours, the perpetrator shot and killed 22 individuals (one of whom was expecting a child) and wounded three others. This event highlighted several flaws within the RCMP’s organizational structure and the way they respond to critical situations (MCC, 2023).

the struggle police organizations face in attracting sufficient applicants amid a shrinking labour pool (NSICOP, 2023; Skaggs et al., 2022; Task Force on Governance and Cultural Change in the RCMP, 2007). Additionally, there is often a wide range of competition as qualified applicants have various options when choosing which police agencies to apply with (Task Force on Governance and Cultural Change in the RCMP, 2007). Numerous studies highlight inadequate training as a key driver of officer turnover (Oliver, 2014; Orrick, 2008; Skaggs et al., 2022; Taylor et al., 2006; Wilson et al., 2010b). Whereas other studies state that it becomes a significant challenge to fill positions as officers retire. Research has found that police organizations receive minimal guidance when determining recruitment methods. Jordan et al. (2009) found that only one in five agencies had recruitment strategies targeted to women and minority groups. Another reason police agencies are struggling with recruitment is the changing preferences of younger generations interested in a career in policing (Wilson et al., 2010a). All these components contribute to a lack of interest in applying to law enforcement jobs, as evidenced among the next generation of police officers.

Despite efforts to boost recruitment, law enforcement agencies worldwide continue to struggle (Wilson et al., 2010a). Thus, it has become evident that current recruitment and training methods are not adequate for the increasingly complex needs of police organizations (NSICOP, 2023). As such, there has been significant attention on the idea of entirely modifying recruitment models. In addition, as there continues to be an emphasis on work/ life balance, current models are not sustainable or appealing enough to attract the volume of new officers required (Task Force on Governance and Cultural Change in the RCMP, 2007). The need to change recruitment models underscores the importance of understanding how young individuals perceive policing careers and the factors that influence their motivation to apply.

Barriers to Joining Policing. There are various barriers to joining law enforcement which contribute to the ongoing recruitment crisis. Rigaux and Cunningham (2021) suggest some of the main obstacles involve an unwelcoming culture, negative views of the police, and recruiting practices that are unfriendly to minorities. Cashmore (2001) found that family and peer support, and lack of mentoring, are additional reasons that individuals do not join law enforcement. Vermeer et al. (2020) added to this literature by stating that fear of not fitting in and perceptions of not being qualified are reasons individuals do not apply. However, one of the most common reasons associated with the lack of recruitment is due to perceptions of prejudice within police culture (Vermeer et al., 2020). In fact, many minority groups, such as racialized individuals and women, believe that recruitment processes for police agencies directly discriminate against these groups (Wilson et al., 2016).

Recruitment of racialized individuals has remained a significant obstacle for law enforcement organizations worldwide (Cashmore, 2001), despite the increases observed in recent years (Aiello, 2021). In a Canadian context, data from 2017 showed that 22.3% of the population identified as visible minorities, whereas only 8.4% of police officers were visible minorities (Statistics Canada, 2017). As a result, law enforcement agencies remain homogeneous and fail to represent the community population. Aiello (2021) discusses several benefits of increased representation in policing, including greater legitimacy and expanded knowledge and comfort with diverse cultures. However, there are numerous barriers for racialized individuals which prevent them from pursuing careers in policing. A study conducted by Rossler et al. (2018), which examined how racialized individuals perceive barriers to policing careers, found that Black individuals reported a lack of approval from their support system, which hindered their desire to join law enforcement. These participants were more likely than Caucasian participants

to believe that the police engage in racial profiling (Rossler et al., 2018). Latino and Hispanic participants in this study indicated that a barrier to pursuing careers in law enforcement was their lack of opportunities to learn about career paths (Rossler et al., 2018).

In addition to racialized individuals, recruitment for women into policing has been a challenge. The United States experienced a substantial increase in the number of female police officers in the 1970s and 1980s. However, this trend began to slow in the 1990s and 2000s (Cordner & Cordner, 2011). In Canada, the number of women in policing increased from 4% in 1986 to 22% in 2018 (Cyr & Ricciardelli, 2024). While this shows a substantial increase in the number of women in policing careers, equal representation has yet to be obtained (Vermeer et al., 2020). One of the main reasons for the lack of equal representation is that not enough women apply for careers in policing (Aiello, 2021). Reasons for this are lower perceived job fit (Aiello, 2021), physical testing, and, most prominently, the male-dominated police culture (Cordner & Cordner, 2011; Rossler et al., 2020). Female police officers also face barriers after entering the field, as policies relevant to women, such as maternity leave, are underdeveloped (Rossler et al., 2020). Additionally, research indicates that women encounter difficulties in securing promotions or specialized training that would advance their careers (Archbold & Schulz, 2008; Cyr & Ricciardelli, 2024; Shea, 2008). Yim (2009) suggests that another possible explanation is that women may simply not be interested in law enforcement careers or have been socialized to believe they are not qualified. More recently, Cyr and Ricciardelli (2024) elaborate on this, concluding that gender plays an important role in shaping a woman's decision to pursue a career in policing. Despite improvements, policing still maintains features of an "all-boys club" which does not respond to femininity or female values (Rabe-Hemp, 2008). Cordner and Cordner (2011) argue that police culture would need to change significantly for more women to be

attracted to the field. However, this is a challenging task involving various complex issues.

Tailoring recruitment practices to women is the first step to increasing overall recruitment. As with the recruitment of racialized individuals, if women see an increase in women in law enforcement and can identify with them, there is a greater chance of success.

While there is a significant amount of research on how to improve recruitment strategies for racialized individuals and women in policing, there is less research concerning recruitment strategies that target young individuals. However, Williams and Sondhi (2022) identified that recruitment approaches need to be developed to motivate young individuals to apply. Given shifts in how people view police institutions across countries, Todak (2017) examined how a police legitimacy crisis would affect young individuals' decisions to become police officers. In 2017, Todak (2017) interviewed criminal justice students at a university within the United States to determine how a police legitimacy crisis would impact their decision to become police officers. The students acknowledged that the legitimacy crisis would pose challenges for police officers, as they might face greater hostility and disrespect from citizens. However, these challenges did not impact whether the participants wanted to become police officers. Instead, the students stated that they looked forward to the opportunity to improve overall perceptions of police officers through positive interactions with citizens (Todak, 2017). Students felt that becoming a police officer during a legitimacy crisis would be meaningful work. It is important to note that while this study took place during a police legitimacy crisis in the United States, it occurred before more recent movements such as the Defund the Police movement. Thus, it is unknown how results would differ more recently. While the study by Todak (2017) found that a police legitimacy crisis is not a deterrent to pursuing a career in policing, younger populations appear to have changing values regarding their future careers. They prefer flatter organizational

structures with greater transparency (Williams & Sondhi, 2022). Young individuals are placing a greater importance on work-life balance and well-being. A study by Lord and Friday (2003) found that 50% of student participants viewed shift work and irregular hours as barriers to pursuing a career in law enforcement. There is even a shift in value towards ideas of public service rather than concerns over financial or job stability (Williams & Sondhi, 2022). Despite these changes in values, this younger population is more likely to be comfortable with diversity and be interested in promoting the values of different cultures. Additionally, young individuals are likely to possess more specialized skills, which would be beneficial in a law enforcement environment. The lack of literature examining how changes in values among young individuals affect recruitment creates a gap that warrants further study.

Problems with Training

Lastly, problems with training protocols are another possible reason for the shift in how individuals view the police. To become a police officer, individuals must complete a specified training process to get them acclimated to the realities of law enforcement (Chappell & Lanza-Kaduce, 2010). Training protocols differ among police agencies and depend on various structural and historical factors pertinent to that agency (Karp & Stenmark, 2011). These training protocols ensure that all recruits are trained to the same standard by producing a syllabus of desired tasks and skills to be learned (White, 2006). In addition, training practices mould recruits to the “accepted” organizational culture (Chappell & Lanza-Kaduce, 2010). Macdonald (1987) likens police training to a conveyor belt, in which individuals without specific knowledge or skills enter the machine at one end and emerge on the other side as police officers, having been shaped into the desired mould. Recently, for some law enforcement agencies, police training has evolved to include education on biases and prejudices, particularly when it comes to racialized groups. In

theory, this allows recruits to broaden their knowledge of various cultures, enabling them to better engage with the community (Rigaux & Cunningham, 2021).

There has been considerable discontent with the various procedures and teachings incorporated into police training. In a study conducted in England and Wales, White (2006) found that police training lacked a moral compass because the methods used were separated from the purpose. To reform training practices to better address societal concerns and objective security needs, a larger debate is needed about the purpose of policing and its specific goals. Karp and Stenmark (2011) take the idea of reforming training practices one step further, arguing that police work should always be in a state of continuous development. Their research, conducted in Sweden, demonstrates the continued importance of police organizations adopting new knowledge and translating it into practical applications. Chappell and Lanza-Kaduce (2010) add to this by stating that policing is such a diverse job. Thus, law enforcement agencies must adopt a structure that facilitates flexibility.

Among the research on various police agency training protocols, a common theme emerges. The training components are based on a highly militaristic and bureaucratic structure and culture (Chappell & Lanza-Kaduce, 2010). North American police departments are characterized by a paramilitary style. This training style emphasizes physical training, performance under stress, learning defensive tactics, and the use of weapons and force (Chappell & Lanza-Kaduce, 2010). In addition, there is an emphasis on the chain of command and on group punishment and discipline, which foster an us-versus-them mentality (Kraska & Cubellis, 1997). However, research suggests that the organization and culture of a paramilitary-bureaucratic structure is no longer serving the intended purpose of policing (Angell, 1971; Bayley, 1994; Chappell & Lanza-Kaduce, 2010; Fogelson, 1977; Skolnick & Ffye, 1993). As a

result, it is important not only to investigate what young individuals look for in a policing career but also whether the training structures of police organizations are contributing to the shift in perceptions of this career path.

Motivations for Pursuing a Career in Policing

There is significant research on the motivations for pursuing a law enforcement career. Within this literature, two common themes emerge. People state that they were interested in a career in law enforcement for the economic characteristics such as pay, benefits, opportunities for career advancement, and early retirement (Gibbs, 2019; Raganella & White, 2004; Rigaux & Cunningham, 2020). The second theme emphasizes humanitarian qualities, including the ability to assist people and provide community services (Gibbs, 2019; Raganella & White, 2004; Rigaux & Cunningham, 2020). While a large portion of the literature focuses on the motivations of men, there is some research conducted on female police officers, racialized individuals, and members of the LGBTQ community.

The literature focusing on Caucasian men's motivations for pursuing law enforcement careers often highlights the same factors (Raganella & White, 2004). Earlier literature reports that the desire to help others frequently emerges as a primary motive for joining law enforcement (Cumming et al., 1965). Other motivating factors include job security reasons (Westley, 1970), pay (Lester, 1983), companionship with coworkers and fighting crime (Clinkinbeard et al., 2021). A large body of literature suggests that women often pursue careers in policing for similar reasons to those of men (Foley et al., 2008; Meagher & Yentes, 1986; Raganella & White, 2004). Reasons such as job security, benefits, and early retirement are often cited as motivating factors (Gibbs, 2019). Clinkinbeard et al. (2021) state that, as with men, the desire to help others and fight crime is a motivating factor. Raganella and White (2004) add to this literature by stating

that the desire for power and authority is a motivating factor for women, just as they are for men. A study conducted in the United States aimed at examining the experiences and motivations of female police officers found that the majority of the participants cited the desire to help people as the primary motivation for pursuing careers in policing (Seklecki & Paynich, 2007). While the research on women in policing does demonstrate that their motivations are similar to those of men, some studies reveal that the degree of these motivations varies between women and men. For example, Raganella and White (2004) found that, while both women and men cited the desire to help others as a motivation for entering law enforcement, women ranked this factor higher than men did. Similar results were found for the factor on opportunities for career advancement (Raganella & White, 2004). However, male police officers ranked social status higher compared to female police officers (Zedeck et al., 1981). Overall, while the research demonstrates many similarities between women's and men's motivations for pursuing careers in policing, there are notable differences.

The literature which examines the motivations of racialized individuals pursuing careers in policing notes some differences compared to Caucasian individuals. Lester (1983) found that racialized individuals rated job security as a more important factor for joining law enforcement. This aligns with Alex's (1969) finding that racialized individuals pursued careers in policing due to benefits such as a secure income and opportunity for advancement over the actual police work itself. A more recent study examining motivations to become a police officer through a survey sent to police recruits in the United States found that economic considerations and humanitarian motives are important for racialized individuals, specifically Black and Latin individuals (Schuck, 2020). Raganella and White (2004) examined survey data from police recruits at the New York City Police Department and found that motivating factors were nearly identical for

Black and Hispanic recruits. Both groups ranked the opportunity to help people as the most important motivating factor, followed by job security, job benefits, and opportunities for advancement. In addition, both Black and Hispanic participants agreed that lack of other career opportunities, salary, and military-like structure were the least influential factors when deciding to pursue a career in policing (Raganella & White, 2004). Despite the differences in motivations between racialized individuals and Caucasian individuals reported in these studies, some literature found the differences to be only minor. While finding that Black police officers were more interested in the economic benefits of policing and the opportunity to help others, Reiss (1967) notes that these differences were only minor. There is also literature which looks at different racialized groups, such as Alaska Natives. Riley (2002) found that these individuals ranked helping the community as an important factor when pursuing a career in policing. In addition, participants within this study stated that preserving links to their families, villages, and cultural past were of great importance, but they also acknowledged the attractions of the modern economy (Riley, 2002).

The small volume of literature conducted on the LGBTQ community found that the motivations of these individuals to join law enforcement differ from what has been discovered with men, women and racialized individuals. Giwa et al. (2022) conducted a study interviewing women employed with the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary in Canada who identified as either lesbian or bisexual. Results indicated that participants pursued careers in policing out of necessity, mainly due to economic reasons. Participants noted that they struggled to find work or found employment that did not meet their personal and/or familial needs. While policing was not always a first choice for these participants, the career offered the potential for a high salary and good benefits (Giwa et al., 2022).

While there is a lack of literature that explicitly examines young individuals' motivations for pursuing careers in policing, there is a large amount of literature that investigates criminal justice students and their career goals generally. Li et al. (2023) examined the aspirations of Hispanic criminal justice students at a university near the United States-Mexico border. They found that law enforcement was the most popular career choice for criminal justice students. Particularly, students with a positive view of the police were more likely to pursue a career in law enforcement (Li et al., 2023). However, the research on criminal justice students indicates that careers in policing are consistently more attractive to traditional recruits, i.e., Caucasian men (Wortley et al., 1996). Multiple studies revealed that female criminal justice students were less likely to be interested in pursuing a career in policing (Li et al., 2021; Li et al., 2023; Yim, 2009). Buckley (1986) conducted a study involving criminal justice students located in Canada and found that men were twice as likely as women to be interested in law enforcement careers (Li et al., 2021). Krimmel and Tartaro (1999) conducted a study in which they surveyed several hundred criminal justice students at various colleges and universities in the United States. They found that men were more interested in law enforcement careers, whereas women were more interested in attending law school (Li et al., 2021). Yim (2009) found similar results in their study of criminal justice students in the United States, reporting that 77% of male students expressed interest in law enforcement, while only 23% of female students did. These conclusions are consistent with racialized criminal justice students as well. Li et al. (2021) conducted a study aiming to determine the desirability of law enforcement careers among Hispanic students at a university in the United States. They found that Hispanic female students found law enforcement careers less appealing compared to Hispanic male students. In addition, Gabbidon et al. (2003) found that only a quarter of the Black students they surveyed were interested in pursuing careers

in law enforcement. While some motivations of joining a career in policing are similar across various populations, women, racialized individuals, members of the LGBTQ community, and criminal justice students vary concerning the degree of emphasis placed on specific motivations over others.

Conclusion

Numerous reasons have been identified that can partially explain the shift in how people view the police, with particular emphasis on the RCMP. Police culture, and the lack of change seen over the past several decades, is blamed for negative attributes associated with law enforcement and thus is identified as a reason for worsening attitudes. Recruitment to law enforcement careers has historically targeted Caucasian men, making it challenging for racialized and non-heteronormative groups to pursue a career. Similarly, training protocols have been identified as being designed to target a very homogenous group, thus creating further barriers for racialized and non-heteronormative individuals who wish to pursue a career in policing. In addition to identifying barriers individuals might face when considering a career in policing, it is essential to examine the motivating factors that drive individuals towards this career. Individuals generally desire a career in policing for two reasons. Firstly, for the economic characteristics such as pay and benefits. Secondly, for humanitarian qualities such as helping the community. While this generally applies to Caucasian men, women and racialized individuals, younger generations are considering different characteristics when determining future career options. Based on this literature, Social Representation Theory provides a framework for applying what is currently known about the motivations and barriers individuals experience when considering policing careers, thereby generating a better understanding of the nuances and characteristics associated with students and their interest in policing careers.

Theoretical Framework

Social representation theory, along with the concept of social embeddedness, will help me examine the attitudes and resistance of young individuals considering careers in policing. Social representation theory explains how individuals attach meaning to phenomena as a way of understanding the world around them. This theory will provide insights into how young individuals are structuring law enforcement careers and the ultimate impact on their interest in applying. Finally, social embeddedness highlights an important and influential factor for individuals as they apply to police agencies and seek support through their social networks and professional connections. While these chosen theories and concepts have been utilized in the general field of social sciences, to my knowledge, they have not been utilized when examining individuals interested in applying to police agencies. Utilizing Social Representation Theory, along with social embeddedness, to examine police recruitment and attitudes towards policing careers will address any shortcomings and lead to a greater understanding of the specific characteristics that influence decisions to apply for careers in policing.

Social Representation Theory

Grounded in social psychological thinking, Social Representation Theory (SRT) is designed to capture the shared, everyday representations through which people orient themselves in the world (Moscovici, 1988). This theory is often referred to as a theory of “common sense” because it accounts for the way in which common sense is formed, how it is structured, and focuses on lay thinking (Bonetto & Lo Monaco, 2018; Ernst-Vintila, et al., 2011; Rateau et al., 2011). More specifically, it focuses on how members of a specific social group construct common views of social objects or what is referred to as social representations (Bonetto & Lo Monaco, 2018; Brunel et al., 2017; Moloney & Walker, 2002; Moscovici, 1988; Wagner, 1995;

Wagner, 1998). The concept of social representations has been defined by many authors. Broadly speaking, social representations are defined as shared worldviews or pieces of knowledge (Andreouli & Chrysoschoou, 2015; Bonetto et al., 2020; Elcheroth et al., 2011). Rateau et al. (2011) define social representations as systems of ideas, knowledge, and beliefs particular to a culture, social category, or group regarding objects in the social environment. Bonetto and Girandola et al. (2022) define social representations as what people think of knowing and are persuaded to know about objects, situations and given groups. Elaborating on this, social representations can be defined as a set of ideas, opinions, attitudes, and knowledge beliefs that are shared by a social group about a social object (Bonetto et al., 2018; Bonetto & Lo Monaco, 2018; Keczer et al., 2016; Moscovici, 2008; Rateau, et al., 2011). Rateau et al. (2011) explain how, over the course of interactions with various social groups, individuals acquire and transmit knowledge, beliefs, and values that allow them to share a common conception of things. Andersén (2010) explains how social representations are considered building blocks for social identities. From a structural perspective, social representations can be defined as organized, structured sets of cognitions shared by members of the same social group (Bonetto et al., 2020; Bonetto, Girandola et al., 2022). Moscovici (2008) states that social representations have an autonomous psychological texture but are also specific to our society and culture. Despite the variety of definitions, the notion of “sharing” is often mentioned and constitutes one of the main characteristics associated with social representations (Bonetto et al., 2020; Rateau et al., 2011). This idea of a shared worldview or piece of knowledge suggests that, within SRT, the focus is not on what individuals think but on what they think other people think (Bonetto et al., 2011; Elcheroth et al., 2011).

Social Representation Theory is fundamentally rooted in epistemic and affiliative needs (Bonetto & Lo Monaco, 2018). In this context, epistemic refers to the need to possess a reliable understanding of the environment (Bonetto & Lo Monaco, 2018; Hardin & Higgins, 1996; Kopietz et al., 2010). Using social representations, various social groups can provide their members with common meanings given to specific objects (Bonetto, Pichot et al., 2022), which allows them to not only understand these objects but also possess a perceived sense of control over the objects (Bonetto, Pichot et al., 2022). As a result, this allows individuals to perceive their environment as stable, predictable, and within their control (Bonetto & Lo Monaco, 2018; Echterhoff et al., 2009), and to reduce their overall uncertainty about the environment (Bonetto, Pichot et al., 2022). Within SRT, the drive to satisfy affiliative needs draws individuals to seek connections with certain groups (Bonetto & Lo Monaco, 2018; Hogg & Abrams, 1988). These groups provide meaning for their members through the creation of shared viewpoints and knowledge, which ultimately satisfy individuals' affiliative needs (Bonetto & Lo Monaco, 2018; Dugas & Kruglanski, 2018; Kruglanski et al., 2006).

Another aspect of Social Representation Theory looks at how social representations depend on a distinction between central or “core” cognitions and peripheral ones (Bonetto et al., 2018; Bonetto, Girandola et al., 2022). Central cognitions are composed of various consensual ways of thinking within a specific group (Bonetto, Girandola et al., 2022). These are often linked to a group's history and their identity (Bonetto, Girandola et al., 2022; Zouhri & Rateau, 2015). On the other hand, peripheral cognitions refer to the remaining part of a representation (Bonetto, Girandola et al., 2022; Rateau et al., 2011). These are not stable or consensual and ultimately allow for the integration of individual experiences (Bonetto, Girandola et al., 2022; Rateau et al., 2011).

Social Representation Theory moves away from the traditional individualistic approach that dominates much of mainstream psychology (O'Connor, 2012). Instead of focusing on knowledge as an individualistic process, the emphasis is on knowledge grounded in shared and social motivations (O'Connor, 2012). By communicating with members of the same social group, individuals become exposed to the elements that constitute a social representation (Gillespie, 2008; Rateau et al., 2011). Being part of a social group and sharing the same social representations allows individuals not only to claim membership in that group, but also to distinguish between those who do not share those representations (Rateau et al., 2011). This aids in identity formation and protection (Howarth, 2002; O'Connor, 2012), which becomes especially apparent when a community or specific group is confronted with a threatening phenomenon. However, individuals are increasingly navigating between these so-called threatening phenomena and knowledge discourses. As a result, they can choose what is relevant to them in a given context (Gillespie, 2008). Research suggests that individuals will adhere to certain social representations when it benefits them and their approval within a specific group (Bonetto, Girandola et al., 2022).

Given the flexibility of Social Representation Theory, it has been applied across various research areas (Rateau et al., 2011). Specifically, this theoretical framework has been applied across various fields of the social sciences, including sociology, anthropology, history, and geography (Rateau et al., 2011). As stated by Moscovici (2008), the use of SRT is driven by people's motivation to know the world around them and make the unfamiliar familiar. This is achieved through two processes. Firstly, by using the various pre-existing representations attached to various phenomena, a specific group can attach meaning to a new phenomenon (O'Connor, 2012). Secondly, by creating a concrete representation of the new phenomenon that

is grounded in previously known representations of various objects, ideas or concepts (O'Connor, 2012). These processes are particularly useful when applying SRT to various public issues (O'Connor, 2012). Individuals are always looking for explanations for the various events around them. However, explanations are not always readily available. As a result, SRT can allow individuals to construct explanations for particular issues around them that would otherwise be unexplainable (O'Connor, 2012). To my knowledge, Social Representation Theory has not specifically been applied to any studies on police recruitment. However, it has been loosely applied to discussions of crime representation across countries (Muncher et al., 1996). Despite the lack of application to police recruitment specifically, SRT is a useful framework for understanding how individuals perceive police careers and the various representations associated with this career. According to O'Connor (2012), when confusion arises due to a crisis, individuals are motivated to construct an understanding of the situation based on existing representations in order to adapt. Given the negative shift in how people view the police and the overall decline in applicants to law enforcement careers, individuals might be adapting their representations in order to determine whether they want to pursue this career.

Social Embeddedness

Granovetter (1973) describes social embeddedness as the idea that an individual's personal experience is closely connected to larger-scale aspects of social structure. An individual's relationships with other people impact various aspects of their lives, such as the diffusion of influence and information, opportunities, and community organization (Granovetter, 1973). In turn, various dimensions such as structural, spatial, temporal, and historical can impact the way an individual experiences social embeddedness (Nowak & Raffaelli, 2022). Social embeddedness can be manipulated to both constrain certain activities (Nowak & Raffaelli, 2022)

and enable specific goals (Granovetter, 1973; Nowak & Raffaelli, 2022). The specific contexts in which an individual seeks out information can lead to either encouragement or discouragement regarding certain decisions (van Solinge & Henkens, 2007). This ultimately impacts an individual's subjective experiences and motivates them to act in ways that affirm their identities to a community (Knox & Arshed, 2023).

Social embeddedness can be applied to various contexts within the workforce, such as retirement (van Solinge & Henkens, 2007), as well as various criminological contexts focusing on policy (Knox & Arshed, 2023). Social embeddedness has also been applied to police recruitment. Stubbs et al. (2023) suggest that there is a significant portion of social embeddedness present in police recruitment. Studies conducted in England and Wales have found that every candidate within their sample possessed social embeddedness through their access and utilization of social support (Hesketh & Stubbs, 2023). Connecting with support networks is essential for building identity salience (Stryker & Serpe, 1994) and feelings of belonging (Hesketh & Stubbs, 2023). Thus, social embeddedness can be utilized to understand how police recruits come to their decision to enter the police field. If they do not receive support through their social networks, they might be deterred from applying. This idea is evident in the recruitment crisis, which is affecting many law enforcement agencies across Canada and internationally.

Social embeddedness has also been applied to the area of police recruitment that extends beyond close familial social networks. Stubbs et al. (2023) describe a specific type of social embeddedness that individuals feel if they have a connection to the policing field before applying. Possessing connections with acquaintances or friends who are involved in the policing field in some manner influences a recruit's chances of being successful when applying (Stubbs et

al., 2023). This application of social embeddedness presents an alternative avenue for analyzing the expectations of those wishing to apply to the police force. This is particularly important to consider when evaluating the impact of diversity in policing among women and individuals of colour. Stubbs et al. (2023) state that social embeddedness provides theoretical support for the disproportionality seen in law enforcement. The authors further discuss how this explains why representative recruitment is particularly challenging (Stubbs et al., 2023). Overall, the concept of social embeddedness can be utilized to examine the recruitment crisis and how much weight individuals place on their social connections when considering a career in policing.

The Present Study

Due to recent events, such as major mass protests organized by the Black Lives Matter and Defund the Police movements, there has been a significant global shift in how people view the police. Within a Canadian context, there has been a decline in overall support for the police, as well as in recruitment to law enforcement agencies across the country. This issue has had a particular impact on the RCMP, which has been operating with significant vacancies for many years. While there are many potential reasons for this shift, problems with recruitment and training practices are at the forefront. Therefore, it is important to examine the impact of this on the attitudes of individuals considering a career in law enforcement. There is a vast amount of literature examining the motivations and barriers of women, racialized individuals, and members of the LGBTQ community regarding careers in law enforcement. However, there is little research on the attitudes of young individuals toward careers in policing. This study will address the gaps in the existing literature by examining career aspirations of young individuals, specifically within Canada, while seeking answers to the following questions:

1. What is the nature of young individuals' attitudes towards policing careers currently? In what ways can Social Representation Theory be used to understand these attitudes?
2. What are the nuances and characteristics associated with young individuals' attitudes towards policing careers currently?
3. How have these nuances and characteristics seemingly impacted interest in applying to a career in policing?
4. What is the nature of young individuals' attitudes towards policing careers when comparing policing in Canada generally to the RCMP specifically?

In posing these research questions, this study seeks to achieve two primary research objectives. Firstly, the present study aims to gain a better understanding of the attitudes and resistance young individuals have towards careers in policing and whether this corresponds to the shift in overall perspectives of law enforcement. Secondly, the present study will compare attitudes and resistance towards policing in general within a Canadian context to that of the RCMP specifically.

Chapter III: Investigating Student Perceptions of Policing Careers

Participants

Participants ($N = 230$) were recruited through enrolment at a university located in Ontario, Canada, via links posted to an online collaborative learning space. Two participants did not give consent to participate in the study, and nine participants who provided consent did not answer any survey questions. Thus, 11 participants were removed from the analysis, bringing the total to 219. A total of 95 (43.4%) participants stated they were between the ages of 17 to 19 years old, with 98 (44.7%) stating they were between the ages of 20-22, 24 (11.0%) stating they were between the ages of 23-26, and 2 (0.9%) stating they were older than 26 years old. There were 167 (76.3%) participants who identified as women, 49 (22.4%) who identified as men, 2 (0.9%) who identified as gender-nonconforming, and 1 (0.5%) who preferred not to answer. Participants came from a range of racialized groups, with the majority of participants identifying as white (66.2%, $n = 145$). The remaining participants identified as Asian (12.3%, $n = 27$), Black or African American (6.4%, $n = 14$), Hispanic or Latino (4.6%, $n = 10$), and Indigenous (0.5%, $n = 1$). 21 participants (9.6%) chose the 'other' category, and 1 participant (0.5%) preferred not to answer. The majority of participants were in 2nd year of their undergraduate program (31.1%, $n = 68$) with 30.6% ($n = 67$) stating they were in 1st year, 17.8% ($n = 39$) stating they were in 3rd year, 10.5% ($n = 23$) stating they were in 4th year and 1.8% ($n = 4$) stating they were in 5th year. Sixteen participants (7.3%) stated they were completing graduate studies. No compensation was provided for completing the survey.

Materials

The survey began with basic demographic questions about age, gender, and race/ethnicity. In addition, participants were asked to specify the program they were in and the year of their post-secondary studies.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire portion of the survey consisted of two sections. The first section asked participants general questions regarding their career aspirations, including whether they had previously applied to become a police officer. Afterwards, participants were asked whether they planned to apply to a law enforcement agency upon completing their degree, before being specifically asked about the RCMP. Based on their responses, participants were asked to elaborate on why they would or would not apply to the RCMP by checking items on a provided list. Lastly, participants were asked what qualities they consider important for a policing career as well as the most significant barriers that might impact their decision to apply.

The second section of the questionnaire consisted of various scales from the existing literature. Participants were asked to consider a career in policing in general and to answer questions from six scales. They were then instructed to think specifically about a career with the RCMP and to respond to the same six scales. The Job Interest and Procedural Justice Measures scale (derived from Aiello, 2021) consisted of five items measuring interest in a law enforcement career. Items included statements such as “for me, a job with a law enforcement agency/ the RCMP would be a good place to work” and “I am interested in learning more about a career as a police officer/ an RCMP officer.” Responses were collected on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with higher scores indicating greater interest. One item

in this scale was reverse-coded. In the present sample, this scale demonstrated excellent internal consistency for both the general policing and RCMP portions ($\alpha = .91$ and $\alpha = .93$, respectively).

The Career Outlook scale (derived from Schuck, 2020) consisted of eight items measuring how positive or negative a participant's outlook was regarding a career in policing. Items included statements such as "I will find a job with a law enforcement agency/ the RCMP rewarding," "I know what is expected of me as a police officer/ an RCMP officer," and "I have the knowledge, skills and abilities I need to perform as a police officer/ an RCMP officer effectively." Responses were given on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with higher scores indicating a more positive career outlook. In the present sample, the scale demonstrated good internal consistency for both the general policing and RCMP portions ($\alpha = .83$ and $\alpha = .83$, respectively).

The Work-Life Balance Apprehension scale (derived from Rossler et al., 2020) consisted of four items that measured the degree of apprehension participants felt regarding work-life balance in policing careers. Items included statements such as "a police patrol career/ career with the RCMP would provide me a good opportunity to raise a family." Responses were given on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree), with higher scores indicating greater apprehension about work-life balance. Three items in this scale were reverse-coded. In the present sample, the scale demonstrated questionable internal consistency⁴ for both the general policing and RCMP portions ($\alpha = .63$ and $\alpha = .65$, respectively). However, given that the scale contains only four items, this level of internal consistency is acceptable for the purposes of this research. In addition, this scale has been used in previous research, yielding similar

⁴ Internal consistency refers to the extent which items in a scale are consistent with each other and measuring the same underlying construct (American Psychological Association, n.d.).

internal consistency values ($\alpha = .64$), which suggests consistency across various applications of the scale.

The Social Disapproval scale (derived from Rossler et al., 2018 and Rossler et al., 2020) consisted of three items assessing whether participants believed they would face disapproval in they chose a career in law enforcement. Items included statements such as “my family would not approve of me becoming a police officer/ an RCMP officer.” Responses were given on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree), with higher scores indicating less social approval. All three items in this scale were reverse-coded. In the present sample, the scale demonstrated acceptable internal consistency for the general policing portion ($\alpha = .76$) and good internal consistency for the RCMP portion ($\alpha = .80$).

The Lack of Mentoring scale (derived from Rossler et al., 2018 and Rossler et al., 2020) consisted of three items measuring the degree of mentoring someone might have when considering a career in policing. Items included statements such as “having a mentor would make a difference in helping me choose a law enforcement career/ career with the RCMP” and “I want to know more about law enforcement careers/ careers with the RCMP, but I have never been able to ask anyone about it.” Responses were given on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree), with higher scores indicating less mentoring and opportunities to learn about a policing career. All three items in this scale were reverse-coded. In the present sample, the scale demonstrated questionable internal consistency for the general policing portion ($\alpha = .67$) and acceptable internal consistency for the RCMP portion ($\alpha = .72$). While the Cronbach’s alpha is questionable for the general policing scale, it does not pose great concern due to the small number of items in the scale and its similar internal consistency in previous research ($\alpha = .63$).

The Reasons Questionnaire (derived from Lester, 1983) consisted of 15 items and asked participants to rate the influence of each factor on their decision to pursue a career in policing. Factors included “opportunities for advancement,” “early retirement with good pay,” “excitement of the work,” “job security,” “the job carries power and authority,” “there was a lack of other job alternatives,” among others. Responses were given on a 3-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (no influence) to 3 (very influential).

Procedure

After ethics approval was obtained (Appendix F), participants were recruited to participate via postings on Brightspace, a collaborative learning space used at the University of Ottawa (Appendix A). After clicking on the link in the posting, participants were directed to the study using the online survey tool Qualtrics. Participants were asked to read an informed consent form that provided details about their participation and reiterated the importance of anonymity (Appendix B). Participants who provided consent were directed to a demographic questionnaire (Appendix C). Afterwards, participants were directed to answer questions about their career aspirations as they related to policing in general, as well as with the RCMP specifically (Appendix D). The survey took roughly 15 minutes to complete. Finally, participants were debriefed and thanked for their participation (Appendix E).

Chapter IV: Analysis of Student Perceptions and Career Motivations

Pre-Analysis

Prior to conducting any statistical analyses, the nature of the data was examined to determine how to proceed. Composite scores were created for the Job Interest and Procedural Justice Measures scale, the Career Outlook scale, the Lack of Mentoring scale, the Social Disapproval scale, and the Work-life Balance Apprehension scale by combining the items in each scale to obtain a mean score for each participant. This allowed for the data to be interpreted as a continuous variable. Given that these were also 5-point Likert scales, the distributions needed to be inspected. This was to determine whether the normality assumptions were met and whether parametric analyses could be used. After analyzing the histograms and examining skewness and kurtosis (see Table 1), it was determined that the distribution across all scales was approximately normal, with no severe departures from normality. As a result, parametric analyses were conducted. For the Reasons Questionnaire, composite scores were not created, as each item needed to be analyzed individually. Given that this was a 3-point Likert scale, it did not meet the assumptions of normality, so non-parametric analyses were conducted. In addition to each analysis, effect sizes were determined to provide a better understanding of the impact of each variable on this specific sample. These effect sizes will act as the focus of the interpretation for the results, in order to combat concerns over the generalizability of the sample.

Table 1*Skewness and Kurtosis Values for the Measurement Scales Analyzed*

Type of Policing	Scale	Skewness	Kurtosis
General Policing	Job Interest and Procedural Justice Measures	-.16	-.71
	Career Outlook	-.21	.25
	Lack of Mentoring	-.08	-.49
	Social Disapproval	.06	-.69
	Work-life Balance Apprehension	.05	-.29
RCMP	Job Interest and Procedural Justice Measures	-.17	-.89
	Career Outlook	-.49	.52
	Lack of Mentoring	-.23	-.15
	Social Disapproval	.05	-.52
	Work-life Balance Apprehension	.01	-.58

After inspecting the distribution of the scales, Pearson's r was used to examine the relationship among the scales and determine whether there was any overlap among the constructs being measured. Results indicated that correlations ranged from .018 to .749. The strongest correlation was observed between the Job Interest and Procedural Justice Measures scale and the Career Outlook scale ($r(164) = .75, p < .001$), indicating a very strong, positive relationship. The weakest correlation was observed between the Lack of Mentoring scale and the Social Disapproval scale ($r(164) = .02, p = .815$), indicating no meaningful association between the constructs. While some of the correlations between the scales were statistically significant, they were distinct enough to warrant use in subsequent analyses.

In addition, to ensure that the assumptions for the various statistical analyses were met, the data for the independent variables were reviewed and cleaned. As a result, any group containing fewer than five participants was removed. Only two participants identified as gender-nonconforming, and one stated they preferred not to answer. Thus, these groups were removed, and the updated gender variable consisted of women and men. Regarding age, only two participants reported being older than 26 years. As a result, they were removed, and the updated age variable consisted of the 17 to 19 years old, 20 to 22 years old and 23 to 26 years old categories. Regarding race/ ethnicity, one person identified as Indigenous and one person said they preferred not to answer. These groups were removed, and the updated race/ethnicity variable consisted of Asian, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, White, or other. Responses to program were analyzed, and participants were divided into two categories: criminology programs and non-criminology programs. As for program year, four participants reported being in their 5th year and were thus removed. The remaining groups for program year consisted of 1st year, 2nd year, 3rd year, 4th year and graduate students. The cleaned variables were used for subsequent statistical analyses.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were run on the first section of the questionnaire, which asked participants general questions regarding their career aspirations. Five participants (2.3%) said they had previously applied to a law enforcement agency, and two participants (0.9%) said they had previously applied to be a uniformed officer with the RCMP. It is important to note that the two participants who had previously applied to the RCMP were not also included in the five participants who had applied to other agencies. Thirty-four participants (15.5%) said they plan on applying to a law enforcement agency upon completion of their current academic program,

with 96 (43.8%) saying no and 85 (38.8%) saying they were unsure, or they might apply. Of the participants who said they were going to apply or were unsure/ might apply, 38 (31.7%) said they were going to apply to the RCMP specifically, with 37 (30.8%) saying no and 45 (37.5%) saying they were unsure/ might apply. Participants who indicated they were going to apply to a career with the RCMP or were unsure/ might apply were asked to indicate why by choosing from a list of statements (see Figure 1 for results). Of the 83 participants who answered this question, over 60% indicated that they would apply to the RCMP because it offers opportunities for advancement, and over 50% indicated that the RCMP pays well. Participants who indicated they were not going to apply to the RCMP were also asked to indicate why by choosing from a list of statements (see Figure 2 for results). Of the 37 participants who answered this question, around 30% indicated that they would not apply to the RCMP due to its reputation. Relocation was the second-highest reason participants stated they would not apply to the RCMP.

Figure 1

Reasons Participants Would Apply to a Career with the RCMP

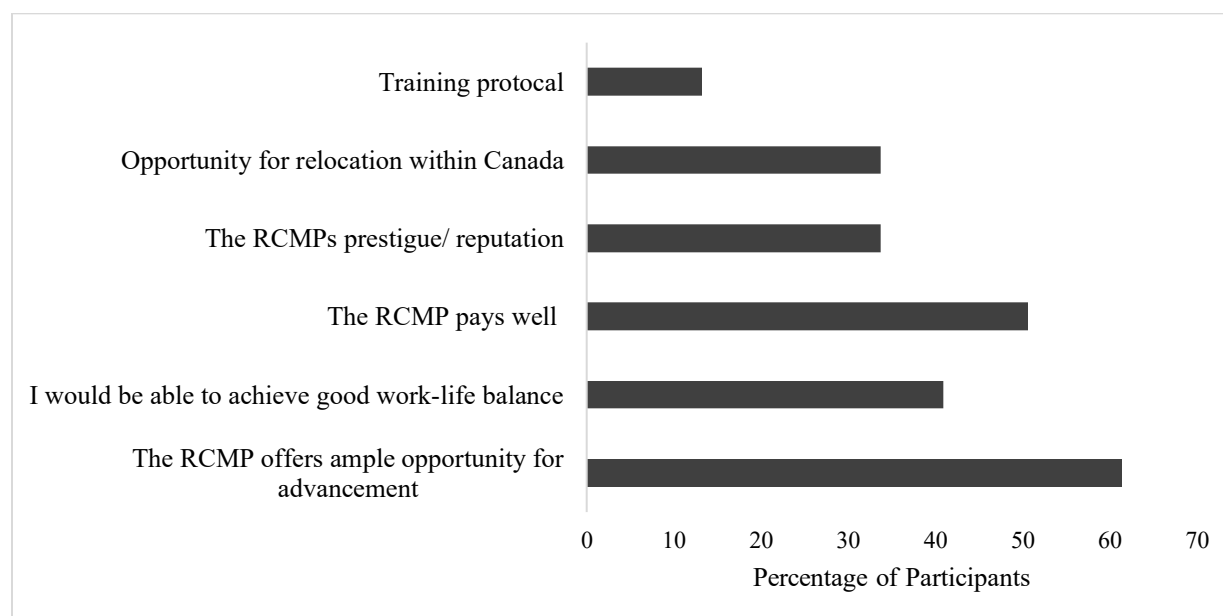
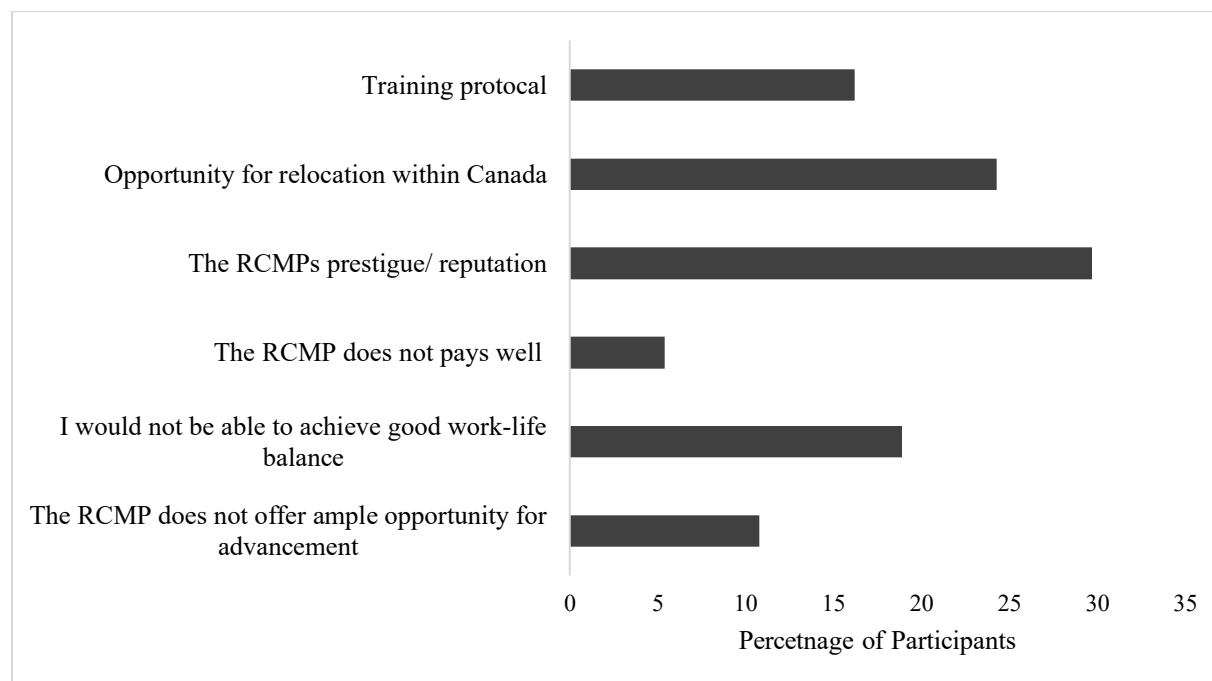
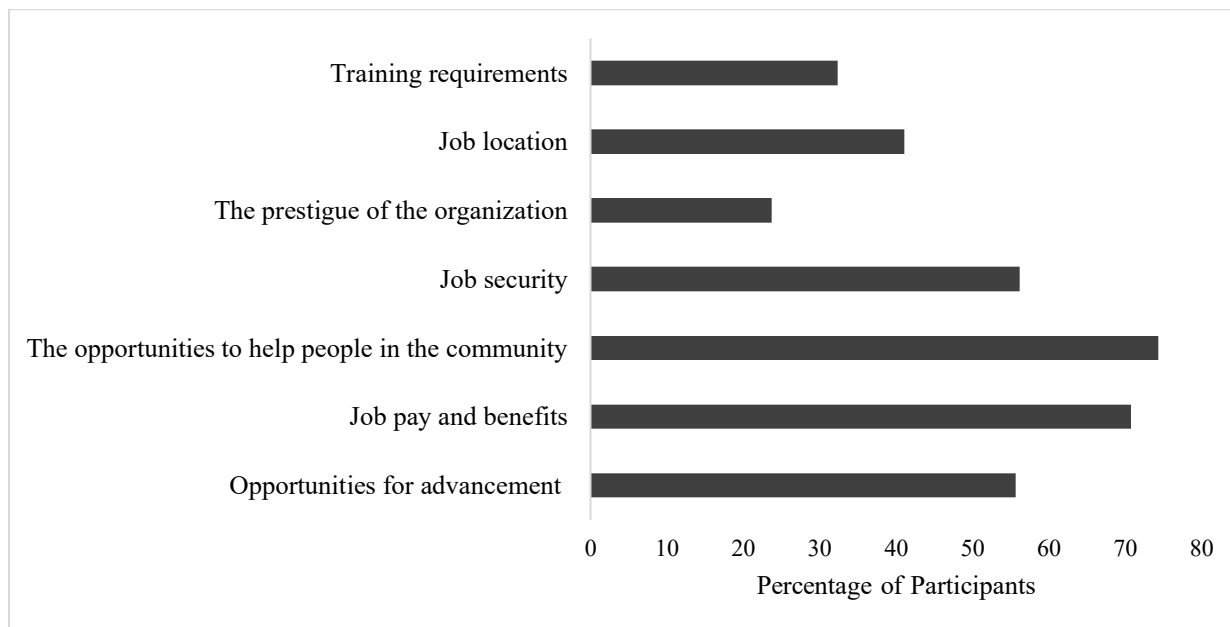


Figure 2*Reasons Participants Would Not Apply to a Career with the RCMP*

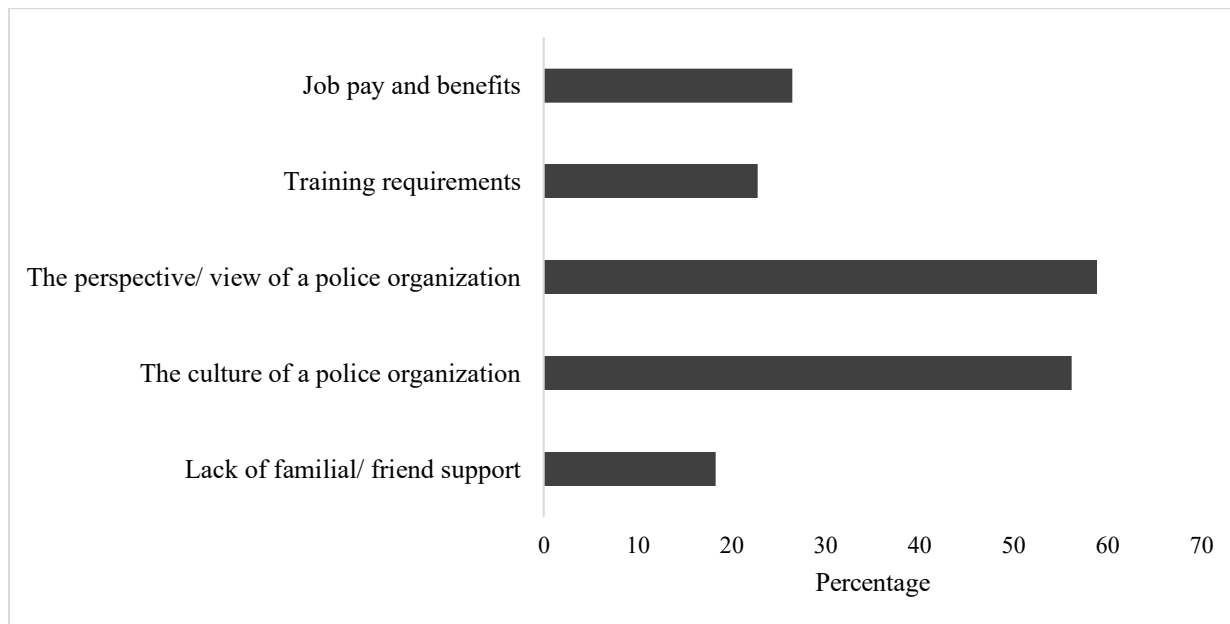
All the participants were asked to indicate which qualities they believed were important when considering a career in policing (see Figure 3 for results). Over 70% indicated that opportunities to help people in the community, as well as the job pay and benefits, were the most important qualities they would consider when determining if they want to pursue a career in law enforcement. In addition, participants were also asked to indicate what the biggest barriers are that would influence their decision to pursue a career in policing (see Figure 4 for results). Over 50% of participants indicated that the perspective/ view of a police organization, as well as its culture, are the most significant barriers that would impact their decision.

Figure 3

Qualities That are Important When Participants Consider a Career in Law Enforcement

**Figure 4**

Barriers Participants Identified When Considering a Career in Law Enforcement



General Policing and RCMP Comparison

Participants were asked to consider a general policing career and to answer questions on the provided scales. They were then instructed to think about a career with the RCMP specifically and respond to the same scales. Afterwards, a paired-samples t-test was conducted to determine whether there was a difference in mean scores between general policing careers and the RCMP specifically. For all five scales, including the Job Interest and Procedural Justice Measures scale ($t(148) = 1.64, p = .103, d = .134, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.027, .295]$), the Career Outlook scale ($t(147) = 1.80, p = .074, d = .148, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.014, .310]$), the Work-life Balance Apprehension scale ($t(145) = 1.38, p = .169, d = .144, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.049, .277]$), the Social Disapproval scale ($t(144) = -0.96, p = .338, d = -.080, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.243, .083]$), and the Lack of Mentoring scale ($t(145) = -1.69, p = .093, d = -.140, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.303, .230]$), there was no statistically significant difference between means (see Table 2). This indicates that whether participants considered a law enforcement career in general or one with the RCMP specifically did not affect their responses to these scales. Furthermore, the effect sizes for all five scales were very small. This indicates that within this specific sample, the relationship between general policing in a Canadian context and the RCMP specifically is negligible.

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations for General Policing and the RCMP on Five Measurement Scales

Measurement Scales	General Policing		RCMP	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Job Interest and Procedural Justice Measures	3.14	1.02	3.01	1.02
Career Outlook	3.28	0.69	3.21	0.69
Work-life Balance Apprehension	3.27	0.67	3.21	0.66
Social Disapproval	2.58	0.99	2.63	0.98
Lack of Mentoring	3.40	0.85	3.48	0.85

For the Reasons Questionnaire, a Wilcoxon signed-rank test was conducted on each of the 15 items to assess whether mean scores differed when participants thought about a career in law enforcement in general versus one with the RCMP specifically. Some of the items yielded significant results. The statement “the excitement of the work” was ranked lower for the RCMP than for general policing ($z = -2.21, p = .027$), indicating it was less influential as a factor than when participants were considering a general policing career. A medium-to-large effect size ($r = -.38$) indicates that there is a meaningful association between these variables. The statement “it provides an opportunity to help people in the community” yielded a similar result, such that participants gave lower rankings for the RCMP compared to general policing ($z = -2.92, p = .003$). There is a large effect ($r = -.49$) of this relationship on this participant pool, indicating a strong association between these variables. Similarly, for the statement “there was a lack of other job alternatives,” participants ranked this item as a more influential factor for the RCMP compared to general policing ($z = -2.04, p = .041$). There was a medium effect of this on the

sample ($r = -.311$), indicating a meaningful association. The statement “because you have friends/ relatives who were police officers” did not yield a significant difference ($z = -.97, p = .330$). However, there was still a small to medium effect size on the sample ($r = -.213$). The statement “the profession has prestige” was also not significant ($z = -1.68, p = .091$) but had a small to medium effect ($r = .27$). Finally, the statement “the job carries power and authority” also yielded a nonsignificant result ($z = -1.52, p = .129$). However, there was a medium effect on the sample ($r = -.32$). Although the Wilcoxon signed-rank test did not reach significance for these three statements, a meaningful relationship may exist but was not detected within this particular sample.

Applying to General Policing

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine whether there was a difference in the scales between participants who indicated they were going to apply to a general policing career after completing their degree and those who did not. Results yielded a significant effect on the Job Interest and Procedural Justice Measures scale ($F(2, 163) = 61.95, p < .001$; see Table 3 for means). A post hoc comparison using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean of the participants who answered ‘yes’ was significantly higher than that of the participants who answered ‘no’ ($p < .001$), and those who answered ‘unsure/ maybe’ ($p < .001$). Additionally, the mean of the participants who answered ‘unsure/ maybe’ was also significantly higher than that of the participants who answered ‘no’ ($p < .001$). There was a large effect ($\eta^2 = .432, 95\% \text{ CI } [.316, .519]$) indicating that whether participants planned to pursue a career in policing upon completion of their current academic program strongly influenced their overall job interest. Results were similar on the Career Outlook scale ($F(2, 163) = 29.55, p < .001$; see Table 3 for means). A post hoc comparison using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean of the

participants who answered 'yes' was significantly higher than that of the participants who answered 'no' ($p < .001$), and those who answered 'unsure/ maybe' ($p < .001$). Additionally, the mean of the participants who answered 'unsure/ maybe' was also significantly higher than that of the participants who answered 'no' ($p < .001$). There was a large effect ($n^2 = .266$, 95% CI [.153, .364]) of this relationship in the given sample, indicating that whether participants intended to pursue a career in policing greatly influenced their outlook on a policing career. Results yielded a significant effect on the Work-life Balance Apprehension scale ($F(2, 163) = 8.94$, $p < .001$; see Table 3 for means). A post hoc comparison using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean of the participants who answered 'no' was significantly higher than that of the participants who answered 'yes' ($p < .001$), and those who answered 'unsure/ maybe' ($p = .014$). There was a medium to large effect ($n^2 = .099$, 95% CI [.024, .185]) of this relationship on this sample, indicating that whether participants were going to apply to a career in policing upon completion of their current academic program generally had a notable influence on their apprehension around work-life balance. Similarly, significant results were found on the Social Disapproval scale ($F(2, 163) = 7.56$, $p < .001$; see Table 3 for means). A post hoc comparison using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean of the participants who answered 'no' was significantly higher than that of the participants who answered 'yes' ($p < .001$), and those who answered 'unsure/ maybe' ($p = .024$). There was a medium to large effect ($n^2 = .085$, 95% CI [.017, .168]) of this relationship on the given sample, indicating that whether participants were going to apply to a career in policing is strongly related to whether they felt they would face social disapproval from their family and friends. Lastly, significant results were found for the Lack of Mentoring scale ($F(2, 163) = 8.62$, $p < .001$; see Table 3 for means). A post hoc comparison using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean of the participants who answered 'yes' was significantly higher than

that of the participants who answered ‘no’ ($p = .033$), and those who answered ‘unsure/ maybe’ ($p < .001$). Additionally, the mean of the participants who answered ‘unsure/ maybe’ was also significantly higher than that of the participants who answered ‘no’ ($p < .001$). There was a medium to large effect ($n^2 = .096$, 95% CI [.023, .181]) of this relationship in this sample, indicating that whether participants intended to pursue a career in policing moderately influenced their perceived access to mentorship opportunities.

Table 3

Means and Standard Errors for Intent to Apply to a Policing Career on the Different Measurement Scales

Scales	Yes		Maybe/ Unsure		No	
	Mean	Std. Error	Mean	Std. Error	Mean	Std. Error
Job Interest and Procedural Justice Measures	4.19	0.13	3.38	0.09	2.44	0.09
Career Outlook	3.87	0.11	3.36	0.07	2.93	0.07
Work-life Balance Apprehension	2.95	0.11	3.17	0.79	3.49	0.08
Social Disapproval	2.16	0.16	2.46	0.12	2.90	0.11
Lack of Mentoring	3.53	0.14	3.67	0.09	3.11	0.09

A Kruskal-Wallis H test was conducted on each of the 15 items on the Reasons Questionnaire and yielded some significant results. Significant results were found for the statement “job security” ($X^2 (2, N = 166) = 7.57, p = .023$). The median scores were 3.00 for participants who answered ‘yes,’ 3.00 for participants who answered ‘unsure/ maybe,’ and 2.00 for participants who answered ‘no.’ A post hoc Dunn-Bonferroni comparison indicated that the median score for participants who answered ‘no’ was significantly lower than that of participants

who answered 'unsure/ maybe' ($p = .026$). There was a small to medium effect ($n^2 = .034$) of this relationship in this sample, suggesting a modest association. Similarly, a significant result was found for the statement "it provides an opportunity to help people in the community" ($X^2 (2, N = 166) = 8.66, p = .013$). The median scores were 3.00 for participants who answered 'yes,' 3.00 for participants who answered 'unsure/ maybe,' and 3.00 for participants who answered 'no.' A post hoc Dunn-Bonferroni comparison indicated that the median score for participants who answered 'no' was significantly different than that of participants who answered 'unsure/ maybe' ($p = .018$). A further look into the mean scores indicated that participants who answered 'no' ($M = 2.52$) had a lower score than those who answered 'yes' ($M = 2.76$) and those who answered 'unsure maybe' ($M = 2.79$). However, the effect size for this relationship in this sample was small to medium ($n^2 = .040$), indicating a limited association between the variables. Significant results were also found for the statement "the job carries power and authority" ($X^2 (2, N = 165) = 7.79, p = .020$). The median scores were 2.00 for participants who answered 'yes,' 1.00 for participants who answered 'unsure/ maybe,' and 1.00 for participants who answered 'no.' A post hoc Dunn-Bonferroni comparison indicated that the median score for participants who answered 'unsure/ maybe' was significantly lower than that of participants who answered 'yes' ($p = .026$). There was a small to medium effect ($n^2 = .035$) of this relationship in this sample, indicating that its magnitude was relatively small. Significant results were also found for the statement "the excitement of the work" ($X^2 (2, N = 165) = 12.07, p = .002$). The median scores were 3.00 for participants who answered 'yes,' 3.00 for participants who answered 'unsure/ maybe,' and 2.00 for participants who answered 'no.' A post hoc Dunn-Bonferroni comparison indicated that the median score for participants who answered 'no' was significantly lower than that of participants who answered 'yes' ($p = .002$). There was a medium effect ($n^2 = .062$) of this relationship in this

sample, indicating that whether participants plan to pursue a policing career has a notable influence on whether they perceive the work's excitement as an influential factor. Lastly, a significant result was also found for the statement “there was a lack of other job alternatives” ($\chi^2(2, N = 164) = 18.45, p < .001$). The median scores were 1.00 for participants who answered ‘yes,’ 1.00 for participants who answered ‘unsure/ maybe,’ and 2.00 for participants who answered ‘no.’ A post hoc Dunn-Bonferroni comparison indicated that the median score for participants who answered ‘no’ was significantly higher than that of participants who answered ‘yes’ ($p < .000$) and of participants who answered ‘unsure/ maybe’ ($p = .002$). There was a large effect ($n^2 = .102$) of this relationship in this sample, indicating that whether participants plan to pursue a policing career is strongly related to whether they can find other employment opportunities.

Applying to the RCMP

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine if there was a difference in the RCMP-specific scales compared to whether participants indicated they were going to apply to the RCMP after the completion of their degree. Results yielded a significant effect on the Job Interest and Procedural Justice Measures scale ($F(2, 85) = 35.43, p < .001$; see Table 4 for means). A post hoc comparison using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean of the participants who answered ‘yes’ was significantly higher than that of the participants who answered ‘no’ ($p < .001$). Additionally, the mean of the participants who answered ‘unsure/ maybe’ was also significantly higher than that of the participants who answered ‘no’ ($p < .001$). There was a large effect ($n^2 = .455, 95\% \text{ CI } [.290, .656]$) of this relationship on this sample, indicating that whether participants stated they were going to apply to the RCMP is strongly related to their overall job interest. Results were similar on the Career Outlook scale ($F(2, 84) = 4.62, p = .012$; see Table 4 for

means). A post hoc comparison using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean of the participants who answered 'yes' was significantly higher than that of the participants who answered 'no' ($p = .011$). There was a large effect ($n^2 = .100$, 95% CI [.005, .218]) of this relationship in this sample, indicating a strong association between whether participants planned to apply to the RCMP upon completion of their current academic program and their outlook on a policing career. Results yielded a significant effect on the Work-life Balance Apprehension scale ($F(2, 83) = 3.15$, $p = .048$; see Table 4 for means). A post hoc comparison using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean of the participants who answered 'no' was significantly higher than that of the participants who answered 'yes' ($p = .037$). There was a medium effect ($n^2 = .071$, 95% CI [.000, .180]) of this relationship in this sample, indicating a moderate relationship between the variables. Significant results were found for the Lack of Mentoring scale, $F(2, 83) = 5.01$, $p = .009$ (see Table 4 for means). A post hoc comparison using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean of the participants who answered 'yes' was significantly higher than that of the participants who answered 'no' ($p = .014$). Additionally, the mean of the participants who answered 'unsure/ maybe' was also significantly higher than that of the participants who answered 'no' ($p = .021$). There was a large effect ($n^2 = .108$, 95% CI [.008, .229]) of this relationship on this sample, indicating that whether participants were going to apply to the RCMP is strongly related to their perceived access to mentorship opportunities. Lastly, there were no significant results found on the Social Disapproval scale ($F(2, 83) = 0.23$, $p = .792$), and the effect size was small effect ($n^2 = .006$, 95% CI [.000, .053]) indicating that the association between whether participants indicated they were going to apply to the RCMP and their perceived social disapproval was minimal.

Table 4

Means and Standard Errors for Intent to Apply to the RCMP on the Different Measurement

Scales

Scales	Yes		Maybe/ Unsure		No	
	Mean	Std. Error	Mean	Std. Error	Mean	Std. Error
Job Interest and Procedural Justice Measures	3.92	0.12	3.53	0.12	2.35	0.15
Career Outlook	3.66	0.10	3.40	0.09	3.22	0.11
Work-life Balance Apprehension	2.87	0.10	3.08	0.12	3.32	0.15
Lack of Mentoring	3.89	0.14	3.87	0.12	3.31	0.15

A Kruskal-Wallis H test was conducted on each of the 15 items on the Reasons Questionnaire and yielded some significant results. Significant results were found for the statement “structured like the military” ($X^2(2, N = 87) = 7.74, p = .021$). The median scores were 2.00 for participants who answered ‘yes,’ 1.00 for participants who answered ‘unsure/ maybe,’ and 1.00 for participants who answered ‘no.’ A post hoc Dunn-Bonferroni comparison indicated that the median score for participants who answered ‘yes’ was significantly higher than that of participants who answered ‘unsure/ maybe’ ($p = .034$). There was a medium effect ($n^2 = .068$) of this relationship on this sample, indicating a moderate relationship between the variables. Similarly, significant results were found for the statement “because you had friends/ relatives who were police officers” ($X^2(2, N = 87) = 7.62, p = .022$). The median scores were 2.00 for participants who answered ‘yes,’ 1.00 for participants who answered ‘unsure/ maybe,’ and 1.00 for participants who answered ‘no.’ A post hoc Dunn-Bonferroni comparison indicated that the median score for participants who answered ‘yes’ was significantly higher than that of

participants who answered 'unsure/ maybe' ($p = .019$). There was a medium effect ($n^2 = .066$) of this relationship on this sample, indicating a meaningful association. Lastly, a significant result was also found for the statement "there was a lack of other job alternatives" ($\chi^2 (2, N = 87) = 7.89, p = .019$). The median scores were 1.00 for participants who answered 'yes,' 1.00 for participants who answered 'unsure/ maybe,' and 2.00 for participants who answered 'no.' A post hoc Dunn-Bonferroni comparison indicated that the median score for participants who answered 'no' was significantly higher than that of participants who answered 'yes' ($p = .027$). There was a medium to large effect ($n^2 = .070$) of this relationship on this sample, indicating a strong relationship between whether participants would apply to the RCMP and if there was a lack of other job opportunities available.

Gender

A chi-square test of independence was conducted to determine whether gender affected participants' likelihood of applying to a policing career in general, and a statistically significant difference was found ($\chi^2 (2) = 8.58, p = .014$). After reviewing the standardized residuals (see Table 5), it is evident that men responded 'yes' more often than was expected. This indicates that men were more likely to indicate they would apply for a policing career upon completing their current academic program than to say they would not. The medium effect size ($V = .201$) indicates a moderate relationship between these variables. Based on the standardized residuals (see Table 5), women's observed responses were on par with their expected responses. When examining the impact of gender on whether participants stated they would apply specifically to the RCMP, no statistically significant difference was found ($\chi^2 (2) = 0.37, p = .832$). Considering the small effect size ($V = .055$), there is little evidence of a meaningful relationship between gender and intent to apply to the RCMP.

Table 5

Observed and Expected Counts, and Standardized Residuals for a Chi-Square Analysis

Comparing Gender and Intent on Applying to a General Policing Career

	Gender	Intent on Applying to General Policing Career		
		Yes	No	Unsure/ Maybe
Woman	Observed Count	20.0	73.0	71.0
	Expected Count	26.3	71.9	65.8
	Standardized Residual	-1.2	.1	.6
Man	Observed Count	14.0	20.0	14.0
	Expected Count	7.7	21.1	19.2
	Standardized Residual	2.3	-.2	-1.2

An independent samples t-test was conducted to determine whether gender had a significant impact on the various scales when considering a career in policing generally. There was no statistically significant difference on the Job Interest and Procedural Justice Measures scale ($t(161) = -1.34, p = .184$). There was a small effect ($d = -.250, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.617, .118]$), indicating that gender is unlikely to be strongly associated with interest in a policing career. Similarly, there was no statistically significant difference between programs on the Career Outlook scale ($t(161) = -0.52, p = .604$). The small effect size ($d = -.097, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.464, .270]$) indicates a minimal association between gender and career outlook. Results also yielded a non-significant difference on the Work-life Balance Apprehension scale ($t(161) = 1.95, p = .053$). There was a small to medium effect ($d = .365, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.005, .733]$), suggesting a potentially meaningful relationship between gender and work-life balance that did not reach statistical

significance in this sample. In addition, results yielded a non-significant difference on the Social Disapproval scale ($t(161) = 1.74, p = .084$). There was a small to medium effect ($d = -.325, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.044, .693]$), indicating that an association between gender and social disapproval may exist. Lastly, there was no statistically significant difference between programs on the Lack of Mentoring scale ($t(161) = 0.78, p = .439$). The small effect size ($d = .145, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.222, .512]$) indicates the association was minimal within the present sample.

A Mann-Whitney U test was conducted on each of the 15 items of the Reasons Questionnaire and yielded a significant result for the statement “job security” ($Z = -2.41, p = .044$), indicating that women found this factor more influential when considering a policing career. However, the effect size was small ($r = -.188$), suggesting that this association in this sample might not be very strong. The remaining statements in the Reasons Questionnaire yielded non-significant results for gender.

An independent samples t-test was conducted to determine whether gender had a significant impact on the various scales when considering a career with the RCMP. There was no statistically significant difference on the Job Interest and Procedural Justice Measures scale ($t(144) = -0.26, p = .793$). There was a small effect ($d = -.052, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.435, .332]$), indicating that gender has a limited association with overall interest in a career with the RCMP. Similarly, there was no statistically significant difference between programs on the Career Outlook scale ($t(143) = 0.03, p = .973$). The small effect size ($d = .007, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.378, .391]$) indicates that the magnitude of this relationship was small. After running the analysis for the Work-life Balance Apprehension scale, Levene’s test was significant ($p = .009$), meaning that equal variances were not assumed. As a result, an independent samples Welch t-test was conducted instead. Results yielded a non-significant difference on the Work-life Balance Apprehension scale ($t(47.546) =$

1.34, $p = .185$). There was a small effect ($d = .294$, 95% CI [-.093, .680]), indicating a limited association between gender and apprehension around work-life balance when considering a career with the RCMP. In addition, results yielded a non-significant difference on the Social Disapproval scale ($t(140) = 1.09$, $p = .279$). There was a small to medium effect ($d = .214$, 95% CI [-.173, .600]), indicating that a noteworthy association between gender and social disapproval may exist. Lastly, there was no statistically significant difference between programs on the Lack of Mentoring scale ($t(141) = 0.26$, $p = .797$). The small effect size ($d = .051$, 95% CI [-.334, .436]) indicates a minimal association between these variables.

A Mann-Whitney U test was conducted on each of the 15 items on the RCMP-specific Reasons Questionnaire and yielded some significant results. There was a significant difference for the statement “opportunities for advancement” ($Z = -2.08$, $p = .037$), indicating that women found this factor to be more influential when considering a career with the RCMP. However, the effect size was small ($r = -.172$), indicating a modest association within this sample. There was also a significant difference for the statement “the excitement of the work” ($Z = -2.34$, $p = .019$), indicating that women found this factor to be more influential when considering a career with the RCMP. However, the effect size was small ($r = -.194$), suggesting the magnitude of this relationship is limited. Additionally, there was a significant difference for the statement “job security” ($Z = -3.17$, $p = .002$), indicating that women found this factor to be more influential when considering a career with the RCMP. There was a small to medium effect size ($r = -.263$), indicating a somewhat meaningful association between the variables. Lastly, there was a significant difference for the statement “the job pays well” ($Z = -2.22$, $p = .027$), indicating that women found this factor to be more influential when considering a career with the RCMP.

However, the effect size was small ($r = -.184$), indicating that gender accounts for only a small portion of the variability in this statement.

Age

A chi-square test of independence was conducted to determine if age affected whether participants said they would apply to a policing career in general, and a non-statistically significant difference was found ($\chi^2 (4) = 5.44, p = .245$). However, considering there is a medium effect size ($V = .113$) within this given sample, a noteworthy association may exist. When examining the impact of age on whether participants stated they would apply to the RCMP specifically, no statistically significant difference was found ($\chi^2 (4) = 0.21, p = .995$). Given the small effect size ($V = .030$), the association between age and intent to apply to the RCMP is limited.

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine whether there was a difference in the scales across participant age. Results yielded a significant effect on the Career Outlook scale ($F(2, 161) = 3.53, p = .031$; see Table 6 for means). A post hoc comparison using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean for participants aged 20 to 22 was significantly higher than that for participants aged 17 to 19 ($p = .033$). There was a small to medium effect ($n^2 = .042, 95\% \text{ CI } [.000, .110]$) of this relationship in this sample, indicating a moderate relationship between the variables. Results yielded a significant effect on the Work-life Balance Apprehension scale ($F(2, 161) = 5.05, p = .007$; see Table 6 for means). A post hoc comparison using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean of participants aged 17 to 19 was significantly higher than that of participants aged 20 to 22 ($p = .007$). There was a medium effect ($n^2 = .059, 95\% \text{ CI } [.005, .134]$) of this relationship on this sample, indicating that participant age has a noticeable influence on apprehension around work-life balance. There were no significant results found on the Job

Interest and Procedural Justice Measures scale ($F(2, 161) = 2.10, p = .055$), and the effect size was small ($n^2 = .025$, 95% CI [.000, .082]), indicating little evidence of a meaningful relationship between these variables. In addition, there were no significant results found on the Social Disapproval scale ($F(2, 161) = 1.32, p = .271$), and the effect size was small ($n^2 = .016$, 95% CI [.000, .065]), suggesting there is a limited association between age and social disapproval. Lastly, there were no significant results found on the Lack of Mentoring scale ($F(2, 161) = 0.70, p = .496$), and the effect size was small ($n^2 = .009$, 95% CI [.000, .048]), indicating that age does not impact whether this group of participants feel they have access to mentorship opportunities.

Table 6

Means and Standard Errors for Age Groups on the Different Measurement Scales

Scales	17-19 Years Old		20-22 Years Old		23-26 Years Old	
	Mean	Std. Error	Mean	Std. Error	Mean	Std. Error
Career Outlook	3.15	0.08	3.44	0.08	3.17	0.14
Work-life Balance Apprehension	3.45	0.09	3.11	0.06	3.16	0.14

A Kruskal-Wallis H test was conducted on each of the 15 items on the Reasons Questionnaire and yielded a significant result for the statement “the job carries power and authority” ($X^2(2, N = 163) = 14.11, p < .001$). The median scores were 2.00 for participants aged 17 to 19, 1.00 for participants aged 20 to 22, and 1.00 for participants aged 23 to 26. A post hoc Dunn-Bonferroni comparison indicated that the median score for participants aged 17 to 19 years was significantly higher than that of participants aged 20 to 22 years ($p = .042$) and 23 to 26 years ($p = .001$). There was a medium effect ($n^2 = .075$) of this relationship in this particular sample, indicating that age has a noticeable influence on whether it is an influential factor in considering a policing career.

A one-way ANOVA was also conducted to determine whether there was a difference in the RCMP-specific scales across participant age groups. No significant results were found on the Job Interest and Procedural Justice Measures scale ($F(2, 145) = 0.47, p = .623$), and the effect size was small ($n^2 = .006, 95\% \text{ CI } [.000, .044]$), indicating a minimal association within the sample. There were also no significant results found on the Career Outlook scale ($F(2, 144) = 1.66, p = .194$), and the effect size was small ($n^2 = .023, 95\% \text{ CI } [.000, .081]$), indicating that age is unlikely to be strongly associated with career outlook in this sample. In addition, no significant results were found on the Work-life Balance Apprehension scale ($F(2, 142) = 2.71, p = .070$). However, the effect size was small to medium ($n^2 = .037, 95\% \text{ CI } [.000, .106]$), suggesting that although the test did not reach statistical significance, a noteworthy association may exist. No significant results were found on the Social Disapproval scale ($F(2, 141) = 0.60, p = .550$). The effect size was small ($n^2 = .008, 95\% \text{ CI } [.000, .050]$), indicating there may not be an association between these variables. Lastly, there were no significant results found on the Lack of Mentoring scale ($F(2, 142) = 0.67, p = .513$), and the effect size was small ($n^2 = .009, 95\% \text{ CI } [.000, .053]$), indicating that age is unlikely to be strongly associated with perceived access to mentorship opportunities.

A Kruskal-Wallis H test was conducted on each of the 15 items on the RCMP-specific Reasons Questionnaire and yielded some significant results. Significant results were found for the statement “structured like the military” ($X^2(2, N = 147) = 8.35, p = .015$). The median scores were 2.00 for participants aged 17 to 19 years, 2.00 for participants aged 20 to 22 years, and 1.00 for participants aged 23 to 26 years. A post hoc Dunn-Bonferroni comparison indicated that the median score for participants aged 17 to 19 years was significantly higher than that for participants aged 23 to 26 years ($p = .012$). There was a small to medium effect ($n^2 = .044$) of

this relationship in this sample, indicating a meaningful association between the variables. Significant results were found for the statement “to fight crime” ($X^2(2, N = 147) = 6.65, p = .036$). The median scores were 2.00 for participants aged 17 to 19 years, 2.00 for participants aged 20 to 22 years, and 1.00 for participants aged 23 to 26 years. A post hoc Dunn-Bonferroni comparison indicated that the median score for participants aged 17 to 19 years was significantly higher than that for participants aged 23 to 26 years ($p = .040$). There was a small to medium effect ($n^2 = .032$) of this relationship in this sample, indicating that age has a noticeable influence on whether the ability to fight crime is a factor in considering a career with the RCMP. Lastly, a significant result was also found for the statement “the job carries power and authority” ($X^2(2, N = 147) = 9.78, p = .008$). The median scores were 1.00 for participants aged 17 to 19 years, 1.00 for participants aged 20 to 22 years, and 1.00 for participants aged 23 to 26 years. A post hoc Dunn-Bonferroni comparison indicated that the median score for participants aged 17 to 19 years was significantly higher than that for participants aged 23 to 26 years ($p = .007$). A further look at the mean scores indicated that participants aged 17 to 19 years ($M = 1.76$) had higher scores than those aged 23 to 26 years ($M = 1.18$). There was a medium effect size ($n^2 = .054$) in this sample, indicating a moderate association between these variables.

Race and Ethnicity

A chi-square test of independence was conducted to determine whether race/ ethnicity affected whether participants said they would apply to a policing career in general. After running the analysis with the clean version of the variable, it was found that five cells (41.7%) had expected cell counts less than five. This violates the chi-square test's assumption. As a result, a new variable was created that combined all racialized groups into a single category for comparison with White individuals. After running the updated analysis, a non-statistically

significant difference was found ($\chi^2 (2) = 1.96, p = .382$). Considering the small effect size ($V = .100$), it is evident that race/ ethnicity is unlikely to be strongly associated with intentions to apply to a general policing career. When looking at the impact of race/ ethnicity on whether participants stated they would apply to the RCMP specifically, the results were similar. There was no statistically significant difference found ($\chi^2 (2) = 0.95, p = .622$), and there was a small effect size ($V = .094$), indicating little evidence of a meaningful association between race/ ethnicity and intent to apply to the RCMP.

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine whether there was a difference in the scales across participant race. There were no significant results found on the Job Interest and Procedural Justice Measures scale ($F(3, 144) = 0.17, p = .914$), and the effect size was small ($n^2 = .004, 95\% \text{ CI } [.000, .018]$), indicating no real association between participant race and job interest. No significant results were found on the Career Outlook scale ($F(3, 144) = 0.60, p = .614$), and the effect size was small ($n^2 = .012, 95\% \text{ CI } [.000, .049]$), suggesting limited evidence of an association. In addition, no significant results were found on the Work-life Balance Apprehension scale ($F(3, 161) = 1.38, p = .252$). The effect size was also small ($n^2 = .028, 95\% \text{ CI } [.000, .082]$), indicating a weak relationship between these factors. No significant results were found for the Social Disapproval scale ($F(3, 144) = 0.87, p = .460$). The small effect size ($n^2 = .018, 95\% \text{ CI } [.000, .062]$) indicates that race/ ethnicity is unlikely to be strongly associated with social disapproval. Lastly, there were no significant results found on the Lack of Mentoring scale ($F(3, 144) = 0.37, p = .775$), and the effect size was small ($n^2 = .008, 95\% \text{ CI } [.000, .036]$), indicating that the association was minimal within the present sample.

A Kruskal-Wallis H test was conducted on each of the 15 items on the Reasons Questionnaire and yielded a significant result for the statement “there was a lack of other job

alternatives” ($X^2(3, N = 146) = 7.91, p = .048$). The median scores were 2.00 for Black/ African American participants, 2.00 for Asian participants, 1.00 for Hispanic/ Latino participants, and 1.00 for White. A post hoc Dunn-Bonferroni comparison indicated that the median score for Black/ African American participants was significantly higher than that of White participants ($p = .044$). There was a small to medium effect ($n^2 = .034$) for this relationship in this sample, indicating a meaningful association between race/ ethnicity and the influence of other job alternatives. The remaining statements for the Reasons Questionnaire were found to be not statistically significant, with small effect sizes

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine whether there was a difference in the RCMP-specific scales by participant race. There were no significant results found on the Job Interest and Procedural Justice Measures scale ($F(3, 129) = 0.58, p = .627$), and the effect size was small ($n^2 = .013, 95\% \text{ CI } [.000, .054]$), indicating no real association between participant race and job interest with the RCMP. No significant results were found on the Career Outlook scale ($F(3, 129) = 0.36, p = .785$), and the effect size was small ($n^2 = .008, 95\% \text{ CI } [.000, .038]$), suggesting limited evidence of an association. In addition, no significant results were found on the Work-life Balance Apprehension scale ($F(3, 127) = 2.26, p = .085$). The effect size was also small ($n^2 = .051, 95\% \text{ CI } [.000, .123]$), indicating a weak relationship between these factors. No significant results were found for the Social Disapproval scale ($F(3, 126) = 1.215, p = .307$). The effect size was small ($n^2 = .028, 95\% \text{ CI } [.000, .086]$), indicating that race/ ethnicity is unlikely to be strongly associated with social disapproval of a career with the RCMP. Lastly, there were no significant results found on the Lack of Mentoring scale ($F(3, 127) = 0.97, p = .407$), and the effect size was small ($n^2 = .228, 95\% \text{ CI } [.000, .074]$), indicating that the association was minimal within the present sample.

A Kruskal-Wallis H test was conducted on each of the 15 items on the RCMP-specific Reasons Questionnaire and yielded a significant result for the statement “the job pays well” ($\chi^2(3, N = 133) = 9.06, p = .028$). The median scores were 3.00 for Black/ African American participants, 2.50 for Asian participants, 3.00 for Hispanic/ Latino participants, and 3.00 for White. However, a post hoc Dunn-Bonferroni comparison indicated no significant difference between the categories. This can occur because the post hoc analysis requires the comparisons meet stricter significance, due to the Dunn-Bonferroni multiple comparison correction. In addition, having unequal participant groups, as is the case within this sample, can reduce the power of post hoc analyses. However, the effect size for this relationship in this sample was small to medium ($n^2 = .046$), suggesting that a noteworthy association may still exist.

Program

A chi-square test of independence was conducted to determine if program had an impact on whether participants said they would apply to a policing career in general, and a statistically significant difference was found ($\chi^2(2) = 20.91, p < .001$). After reviewing the standardized residuals (see Table 7), it is evident that participants in criminology programs answered “no” less often than was expected. This indicates that criminology students were more likely to say they would apply for a policing career upon completing their current academic program than to say they would not. In addition, participants not in criminology programs answered “no” more often than was expected. This indicates they would be less likely to pursue a career in policing upon completing their current academic program. The large effect size ($V = .312$) indicates that the program participants are currently enrolled in is strongly related to intentions to apply to a policing career. When looking at the impact of program on whether participants stated they would apply to the RCMP specifically, there was no statistically significant difference found (χ^2

(2) = 0.86, $p = .649$). Considering the small effect size ($V = .085$), it is evident that the association between program and a career with the RCMP specifically is modest within the present sample.

Table 7

Observed and Expected Counts, and Standardized Residuals for a Chi-Square Analysis Comparing Program and Intent on Applying to a General Policing Career

Program		Intent on Applying to General Policing Career		
		Yes	No	Unsure/ Maybe
Criminology	Observed Count	24.0	30.0	49.0
	Expected Count	16.3	46.0	40.7
	Standardized Residual	1.9	-2.4	1.3
Non-criminology	Observed Count	10.0	66.0	36.0
	Expected Count	17.7	50.0	44.3
	Standardized Residual	-1.8	2.3	-1.2

An independent samples t-test was conducted to determine whether program had a significant impact on the various scales when considering a career in policing generally. Results yielded a significant difference on the Job Interest and Procedural Justice Measures scale ($t(164) = 3.54, p < .001$) such that participants in a criminology program had a greater interest in a law enforcement career (see Table 8 for means). There was a medium effect ($d = .550, 95\% \text{ CI } [.239, .859]$), indicating a moderate relationship between the variables. Results also yielded a significant difference on the Work-life Balance Apprehension scale ($t(164) = -3.06, p = .003$), such that participants not in a criminology program had more apprehension regarding work-life

balance (see Table 8 for means). There was a medium effect ($d = -.476$, 95% CI $[-.784, -.166]$), indicating that program has a noticeable influence on apprehension around work-life balance. In addition, results yielded a significant difference on the Social Disapproval scale ($t(164) = -3.18$, $p = .002$), such that participants not in a criminology program believed they would face more social disapproval compared to those in a criminology program (see Table 8 for means). There was a medium effect ($d = -.494$, 95% CI $[-.803, .185]$), indicating a moderate relationship between the variables in this sample. There was no statistically significant difference between programs on the Career Outlook scale ($t(164) = 1.63$, $p = .105$). The small effect size ($d = .253$, 95% CI $[-.053, .558]$) indicates minimal association between the variables. Lastly, there was no statistically significant difference between programs on the Lack of Mentoring scale ($t(164) = 0.20$, $p = .942$). The small effect size ($d = .031$, 95% CI $[-.274, .335]$) indicates that program is unlikely to be strongly associated with perceived access to mentorship opportunities.

Table 8

Means and Standard Errors for Program on the Different Measurement Scales

Scales	Criminology		Non-Criminology	
	Mean	Std. Error	Mean	Std. Error
Job Interest and Procedural Justice Measures	3.42	0.10	2.88	0.11
Work-life Balance Apprehension	3.11	0.07	3.42	0.07
Social Disapproval	2.35	0.10	2.82	0.11

A Mann-Whitney U test was conducted on each of the 15 items on the Reasons Questionnaire and yielded a significant result for the statement “the excitement of the work” ($Z = -2.82$, $p = .005$), indicating that those in criminology programs indicated this factor as more influential when considering a career in policing. However, the effect size was small to medium

($r = -.219$), indicating a somewhat limited association between the variables. The remaining statements in the Reasons Questionnaire were found to be non-significant.

An independent samples t-test was conducted to determine whether program had a significant impact on the various scales when considering a career with the RCMP. Results yielded a significant difference on the Social Disapproval scale ($t(143) = -2.19, p = .015$), such that participants not in a criminology program believed they would face more social disapproval ($M = 2.81, SE = 0.11$) if pursuing careers with the RCMP compared to those in a criminology program ($M = 2.46, SE = 0.11$). There was a small to medium effect ($d = -.364, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.691, -.034]$), indicating a meaningful association between the variables. There was no statistically significant difference on the Job Interest and Procedural Justice Measures scale ($t(147) = 1.08, p = .140$). There was a very small effect ($d = .178, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.145, .499]$), indicating little evidence of a meaningful relationship between program and job interest for a career with the RCMP. There was also no statistically significant difference between programs on the Career Outlook scale ($t(146) = 1.07, p = .142$). The small effect size ($d = .177, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.147, .499]$) indicates that program is unlikely to be strongly associated with career outlook. There was also no significant difference on the Work-life Balance Apprehension scale ($t(144) = -1.24, p = .109$). There was a small effect ($d = -.204, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.530, .121]$), indicating a minimal association between the variables. Lastly, there was no statistically significant difference between programs on the Lack of Mentoring scale ($t(144) = 0.49, p = .312$). The small effect size ($d = .082, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.243, .406]$) indicates that program is not strongly associated with whether participants in this sample feel they have access to mentorship opportunities.

A Mann-Whitney U test was conducted on each of the 15 items on the RCMP-specific Reasons Questionnaire and yielded some significant results. There was a significant difference

for the statement “the profession has prestige” ($Z = -2.02, p = .044$), indicating that those in criminology programs indicated this factor as more influential when considering a career with the RCMP. However, the effect size was small ($r = -.165$), indicating that the association in this sample is not very strong. There was also a significant difference for the statement “you work on your own a lot; have a great deal of autonomy” ($Z = -2.23, p = .022$), indicating that those in criminology programs indicated this factor as more influential when considering a career with the RCMP. However, the effect size was small ($r = -.188$), indicating a limited association between these variables. Lastly, there was a significant difference for the statement “the job pays well” ($Z = -2.14, p = .033$), indicating that those in criminology programs indicated this factor as more influential when considering a career with the RCMP. However, the effect size was small ($r = -.175$), indicating that the association within this sample is not very strong.

Program Year

A chi-square test of independence was conducted to determine whether program year affected participants’ likelihood of applying to a policing career in general, and a non-statistically significant difference was found ($\chi^2 (8) = 8.04, p = .429$). However, considering there is a medium effect size ($V = .138$) within this given sample, a noteworthy association may exist. When examining the impact of program year on whether participants stated they would apply specifically to the RCMP, no statistically significant difference was found ($\chi^2 (8) = 13.022, p = .111$). However, given the large effect size ($V = .234$) within this sample, a potentially substantial relationship may not have been detected statistically.

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine if there was a difference in the scales compared to program year. There were no significant results found on the Job Interest and Procedural Justice Measures scale ($F(4, 158) = 1.09, p = .362$), and the effect size was small (n^2

= .027, 95% CI [.000, .070]), indicating little evidence of a meaningful relationship between the variables. There were also no significant results found on the Career Outlook scale ($F(4, 158) = 1.33, p = .261$), and the effect size was small ($n^2 = .033$, 95% CI [.000, .080]), suggesting a minimal association. In addition, there were no significant results found on the Work-life Balance Apprehension scale ($F(4, 158) = 1.06, p = .380$), and the effect size was small ($n^2 = .026$, 95% CI [.000, .068]), suggesting that program year is unlikely to be strongly associated with apprehension around work-life balance. No significant results were found for the Social Disapproval scale ($F(5, 158) = 2.33, p = .058$). The effect size was small to medium ($n^2 = .056$, 95% CI [.000, .117]), suggesting a noteworthy association between program year and social disapproval. Lastly, no significant results were found on the Lack of Mentoring scale ($F(4, 158) = 1.20, p = .311$), and the effect size was small ($n^2 = .030$, 95% CI [.000, .075]), indicating a minimal association between the variables.

A Kruskal-Wallis H test was conducted on each of the 15 items on the Reasons Questionnaire and yielded some significant results. A significant result was found for the statement “the profession has prestige” ($X^2(4, N = 163) = 13.03, p = .011$). The median scores were 2.00 for participants in 1st year, 2.00 for participants in 2nd year, 1.00 for participants in 3rd year, 2.00 for participants in 4th year, and 2.00 for participants in graduate studies. A post hoc Dunn-Bonferroni comparison indicated that the median score for participants in 1st year was significantly higher than that of participants in 3rd year ($p = .039$). There was a medium effect ($n^2 = .057$) of this relationship on this sample, a meaningful association between the variables. A significant result was also found for the statement “the job pays well” ($X^2(4, N = 163) = 14.65, p = .005$). The median scores were 2.00 for participants in 1st year, 2.00 for participants in 2nd year, 2.00 for participants in 3rd year, 2.00 for participants in 4th year, and 1.50 for participants in

graduate studies. A post hoc Dunn-Bonferroni comparison indicated that the median score for participants in 3rd year was significantly different than that of participants in 4th year ($p = .007$). A further examination of the mean scores indicated that participants in 4th year had a higher score ($M = 1.95$) compared to participants in 3rd year ($M = 1.92$), although the difference is very minimal. There was a medium effect ($n^2 = .067$) of this relationship on this sample, indicating program year has a noticeable influence on whether pay is an important consideration when applying to a career in law enforcement. Finally, a significant result for the statement “the job carries power and authority” ($X^2(4, N = 162) = 10.06, p = .039$). The median scores were 2.00 for participants in 1st year, 1.00 for participants in 2nd year, 1.00 for participants in 3rd year, 1.00 for participants in 4th year, and 1.00 for participants in graduate studies. However, a post hoc Dunn-Bonferroni comparison indicated that there was no significant difference between the categories. There was a small to medium effect ($n^2 = .038$) of this relationship on this sample, suggesting there is a moderate association between the variables.

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine if there was a difference in the RCMP-specific scales compared to program year. After running the analysis for the Job Interest and Procedural Justice Measures scale, Levene’s test was significant ($p = .025$), meaning that equal variances were not assumed. As a result, a one-way Welch ANOVA was conducted instead. However, there were no significant results found for this scale ($F(4, 53.137) = 1.13, p = .354$), and the effect size was small ($n^2 = .024, 95\% \text{ CI } [.000, .065]$), indicating no real association between program year and job interest for RCMP careers. No significant results were found on the Career Outlook scale ($F(4, 140) = 0.21, p = .933$), and the effect size was small ($n^2 = .006, 95\% \text{ CI } [.000, .016]$), indicating limited evidence of a meaningful relationship. In addition, no significant results were found on the Work-life Balance Apprehension scale ($F(4, 138) = 0.80, p$

= .530). The small effect size ($n^2 = .023$, 95% CI [.000, .063]) suggests that program year is unlikely to be strongly associated with apprehension around work-life balance. No significant results were found for the Social Disapproval scale ($F(5, 137) = 1.18$, $p = .324$). However, the effect size was small to medium ($n^2 = .033$, 95% CI [.000, .084]), indicating that a noteworthy association may exist. Lastly, there were no significant results found on the Lack of Mentoring scale ($F(4, 138) = 1.53$, $p = .195$), and the effect size was small ($n^2 = .043$, 95% CI [.000, .100]), indicating a limited association within the present sample.

A Kruskal-Wallis H test was conducted on each of the 15 items on the RCMP-specific Reasons Questionnaire and yielded some significant results. A significant result was found for the statement “structured like the military” ($X^2(4, N = 145) = 12.11$, $p = .017$). The median scores were 2.00 for participants in 1st year, 1.00 for participants in 2nd year, 1.00 for participants in 3rd year, 1.00 for participants in 4th year, and 1.00 for participants in graduate studies. A post hoc Dunn-Bonferroni comparison indicated that the median score for participants in 1st year was significantly higher than that of participants in 4th year ($p = .041$). There was a medium effect ($n^2 = .057$) of this relationship on this sample, indicating a moderate relationship between the variables. Finally, a significant result was found for the statement “the job carries power and authority” ($X^2(4, N = 145) = 11.41$, $p = .022$). The median scores were 2.00 for participants in 1st year, 1.00 for participants in 2nd year, 1.00 for participants in 3rd year, 1.00 for participants in 4th year, and 1.00 for participants in graduate studies. However, a post hoc Dunn-Bonferroni test indicated no significant difference between the categories. There was a medium effect ($n^2 = .053$) of this relationship in this sample, suggesting that the relationship's magnitude may still be meaningful.

Chapter V: Shifting Attitudes and Their Implications for Recruitment

Although previous research has examined the motivations and barriers of women, racialized individuals, and members of the LGBTQ community regarding careers in law enforcement, there remains a gap in the literature surrounding the attitudes of young individuals, which the current study aimed to address. The goal of this study was to gain a better understanding of the attitudes and resistance young individuals have towards careers in policing and to examine whether this aligns with the decline in public perceptions of law enforcement. In addition, this study aimed to compare attitudes and resistance towards policing careers in general within a Canadian context with those of the RCMP specifically. Given the decline in overall support for the police and in recruitment to law enforcement agencies across the country, it is important to analyze these trends to better understand how the next generation of police officers views this field. To analyze the nature of young individuals' attitudes towards policing careers, participants were asked to complete a questionnaire that examined motivations and barriers for pursuing a policing career as well as overall interest in a career with a law enforcement agency. In addition, participants were asked to respond to various questions, which provided insight into their interests and outlooks on policing careers, apprehensions about work-life balance, social disapproval, mentoring, and reasons for pursuing a career in law enforcement. Participants were asked to answer these questions when thinking about a policing career generally, as well as specifically about the RCMP, to determine whether there was any difference. The results revealed several interesting findings, some of which were consistent with the hypotheses and others which provide new insights into how young individuals perceive policing careers. For the remainder of this section, I will discuss the data in relation to the research questions for this study.

Research Question 1: Nature of Young Individuals' Attitudes

A lot of existing literature examines the nature of young individuals' attitudes towards policing careers by looking at them from specific categories or groups, such as gender, race, etc. As a result, to my knowledge, there is not much literature examining how young individuals as a whole feel about policing careers. Nonetheless, within this literature, Li et al. (2023) found that university-aged students with a more positive view of the police were more likely to be interested in pursuing a law enforcement career. However, previous research also found that greater emphasis is being placed on work-life balance. Thus, the shift work and irregular hours associated with police work are becoming a significant barrier to those considering careers in this field (Lord & Friday, 2003). In addition, after conducting a meta-analysis of mostly United States articles, Williams and Sondhi (2022) found that young individuals value public service more than financial or job stability. The current study aimed to expand on the nature of young individuals' attitudes towards policing careers in general. Results demonstrated that the opportunity to help people in the community was the most important quality for this sample of young individuals when considering a career in policing. This is similar to Williams and Sondhi's (2022) findings around the emphasis of public service. Thus, it is evident that the belief that a law enforcement career provides an opportunity to help people in the community still persists among this sample of young individuals. However, contrary to the findings from Williams and Sondhi (2022), the current study revealed that job pay, job benefits and job security were important qualities for this sample of young individuals when considering a career in policing. While this research project did not investigate why these qualities were important, one possible explanation is that young individuals are seeking stability amid increasing economic uncertainty. Thus, it is possible that the increase in economic uncertainty has rendered the

prospect of finding employment as something that is unstable and outside of one's control. To regain control and view their environment as stable and predictable (Bonetto & Lo Monaco, 2018; Echterhoff et al., 2009), young individuals are adjusting their representations and considering law enforcement careers for additional reasons, such as job pay and benefits. When considering barriers to pursuing policing careers, participants identified the perspective and culture of a police organization as the most significant factors. Not only has there been a shift in attitudes towards the police in Canada (Angus Reid Institute, 2020a; Ruddell, 2022), but the data suggest that the existing police structure and culture are becoming a barrier for those who want to pursue a law enforcement career. The overall shift in attitude towards law enforcement is contributing to a shared knowledge regarding the profession, which is impacting interest in applying (O'Connor, 2012). Individuals can distinguish between what they want from a career and ultimately find that a law enforcement career does not share the same qualities (Rateau et al., 2011).

Given the new motivations for pursuing a law enforcement career and the barriers identified, it appears that the social representations participants in this sample have of policing careers are not aligned with their values. As explained by various authors, social representations are a set of opinions and knowledge beliefs shared by a social group about a social object (Bonetto et al., 2018; Bonetto & Lo Monaco, 2018; Keczer et al., 2016; Moscovici, 2008; Rateau et al., 2011). In the context of this study, social representations are shared by the young individuals in this sample regarding law enforcement careers in general. Since the original formation of the North-West Mounted Police in 1873, society has undergone profound changes that have fundamentally altered how individuals function daily. As a result, individual behaviours, perceptions and beliefs have also shifted. Society has become more inclusive and

accepting of diverse races, religions, and sexual orientations, and has witnessed a significant shift towards greater equality. When considering career options, this shift has prompted young individuals to seek out opportunities that align with their personal values and identity. When considering the results in this study, young individuals in this sample are specifically seeking careers that offer good pay, benefits, and security – characteristics which were not as important for individuals considering policing careers in the past. However, the representations associated with the culture of policing remain persistent, given the barriers that participants identified that impact their decision to pursue a career in law enforcement. In order to have a sense of control and predictability over their environment (Bonetto & Lo Monaco, 2018; Echterhoff et al., 2009), individuals seek out spaces and careers that share similar representations in order to satisfy their affiliative needs (Bonetto & Lo Monaco, 2018; Dugas & Kruglanski, 2018; Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Kruglanski et al., 2006).

Overall, this thesis aimed to investigate the nature of young individuals' attitudes towards law enforcement careers. The results demonstrated that some aspects of these participants' attitudes towards policing careers are similar to those reported in previous research, such as the desire to help individuals in the community and to perform acts of public service. However, participants in this specific sample have identified new characteristics that are impacting their attitudes towards policing careers. Some of these characteristics include job pay, job benefits and job security, which have been identified as important factors. Additionally, the reputation and culture of a police organization were noted as barriers for young individuals considering a career in law enforcement. Over half of the participants identified these characteristics, suggesting that the traits and negative attributes often associated with police culture, such as cynicism,

misconduct, misogyny and racism (Chan, 1996; Sargeant et al., 2017), are directly impacting whether young individuals want to apply.

Research Question 2: Nuances and Characteristics

There is a substantial amount of literature that focuses on the differences between gender and race and the impacts on recruitment for policing careers. Regarding gender, previous research has identified lower perceived job fit, physical testing, and the male-dominated police culture as potential reasons for lower recruitment rates among women (Aiello, 2021; Cordner & Cordner, 2011; Rossler et al., 2020). Yim (2009) elaborated on this by suggesting that women may simply not be interested in a policing career. When considering reasons for pursuing a career in law enforcement, a large body of literature indicates that men and women are relatively similar, despite some minor differences (Foley et al., 2008; Meagher & Yentes, 1986; Raganella & White, 2004). The current study examined the impact of gender on interest in a policing career, and the results were in line with previous literature. When asked whether they were considering applying for a policing career upon completing their academic degree, men said they would apply more often than expected. In contrast, the responses women provided were as expected. When looking at the Reasons Questionnaire, women and men did not significantly differ on most items, suggesting that they pursue policing careers for the same reasons. One notable difference was that women in this sample ranked job security as a highly influential factor when considering a career in policing. However, this effect was only small, suggesting that this relationship might not be present for a more diverse sample. Overall, this implies that the social representations associated with law enforcement careers for men have persisted. What men are persuaded to know about policing careers (Bonetto and Griandola et al., 2022) aligns with their epistemic and affiliative needs (Bonetto & Lo Monaco, 2018; Hardin & Higgins, 1996;

Kopietz et al., 2010), leading them to be interested in applying. However, the social representations that women hold about a law enforcement career remain misaligned with their epistemic and affiliative needs (Bonetto & Lo Monaco, 2018; Hardin & Higgins, 1996; Kopietz et al., 2010), leading them to be less interested in pursuing this career.

Previous literature on race and ethnicity has found that recruiting a more heterogeneous population remains a challenge (Cashmore, 2001). Previous research cites a lack of support system approval and opportunities to learn about policing careers (Rossler et al., 2018). Furthermore, the literature has found that motivations for pursuing a law enforcement career differ across racial groups, particularly in terms of job security and economic considerations (Alex, 1969; Lester, 1983; Schuck, 2020). The current study examined the impact of race and found results that contradicted previous literature, primarily indicating that there was no significant difference among races for most of the concepts analyzed within this specific sample. Race did not affect the likelihood of applying upon completing their current academic program, nor did it affect career outlook or social disapproval. In addition, race did not influence the reasons participants found more influential when considering a law enforcement career. Overall, these findings might suggest that the social representations associated with policing careers are not only the same across the races/ethnicities in this sample but also align with epistemic and affiliative needs. However, it is essential to note that over 65% of participants in this study identified as White. As a result, more data would need to be gathered on different racialized groups and ethnicities to determine the weight of these explanations.

To my knowledge, no literature examines the impact of age on whether someone might consider a career in policing. As a result, this study examined whether age influenced any of the characteristics measured. Results indicated that a greater percentage of 23- to 26-year-olds said

they planned to apply for a law enforcement career upon completing their current academic program. Additionally, among the 17 to 19-year-olds, half said they would not be applying. Participants aged 20 to 22 were more likely to have a positive outlook on policing careers than participants aged 17 to 19. In addition, participants aged 17 to 19 had greater apprehension about work-life balance than participants aged 20 to 22. These results suggest that the older an individual is, the more likely they are to be interested in a policing career and to have a better understanding of what it entails. However, given the lack of literature to compare these results with, it is worth gathering additional data before assigning weight to these findings. Given that these two findings had a medium effect in this sample, it is possible that a similar relationship would hold in a larger, more representative sample. Similarly, the participant's program year was also analyzed in this current study. While there was no impact on intentions to pursue a policing career upon degree completion, participants in the 4th year stated that the pay associated with a policing career was highly influential in their decision to apply. These findings support the idea that the older an individual is and the further they are in their degree, the more likely they are to be interested in a career in policing and the financial benefits associated with it. There are a few explanations as to why this might be occurring. Firstly, as individuals get older and progress in their post-secondary education, it can be assumed that they have had more opportunities to learn about the nuances of law enforcement. This is especially true for individuals with criminology-related degrees who may have been exposed through the completion of various police-focused courses. As a result, learning more about what a policing career entails could make them more interested in applying. Another explanation could be that older individuals have a more “realistic” attitude about life and the need for a well-paying career to help sustain them. As a result, individuals might be satisfied with specific characteristics of policing that support their

lifestyle, such as the rate of pay. Both explanations could be contributing to these results. However, given the lack of existing literature for comparison, the current data is more exploratory in nature and does not allow us to draw a concrete conclusion. Therefore, further research is needed to investigate the impact of age on interest in policing careers.

Similarly, there is a lack of literature comparing students in criminology programs with those not in them. It was anticipated that students in criminology programs would have a greater interest in law enforcement careers and would be more likely to apply. Results are consistent with this assumption. Interestingly, participants not in a criminology program expressed greater apprehension about work-life balance and felt they would face more social disapproval from family and friends. These results suggest that those in criminology programs are more aware of what a policing career entails and are more interested overall. While there is no prior literature for comparison, participants in criminology programs showed a relatively even split compared to those not in criminology programs, suggesting the findings are robust. Additionally, given the nature of a criminology degree, it is logical to assume that students interested in crime-related topics would also be interested in law enforcement careers. In contrast, individuals not in criminology programs may be less aware of what a career in this field entails, which can raise concerns about work-life balance and approval from friends and family. However, further research would be needed on a larger, more representative sample to determine whether these findings can be applied more generally.

When examining the specific nuances and characteristics of young individuals' attitudes towards police careers, it is helpful to consider social representation theory and social embeddedness. Given that some results align with previous literature, it appears that social representations are manifesting differently across participant groups. For example, results

indicate that there is no difference in interest in applying to policing careers among races and ethnicities. This could mean that, across races/ethnicities, policing careers allow both epistemic and affiliative needs to be met (Bonetto & Lo Monaco, 2018). Social representations regarding law enforcement careers have evolved, allowing individuals of all racialized identities to have a sense of understanding and predictability about this type of career (Bonetto & Lo Monaco, 2018; Echterhoff et al., 2009). However, the opposite might be true when considering gender differences. The drive to satisfy affiliative needs draws individuals to seek connections with certain groups (Bonetto & Lo Monaco, 2018; Hogg & Abrams, 1988). As men are more likely to be interested in law enforcement careers, perhaps women's affiliative needs are not being met, leading to a lower application rate. Furthermore, it appears that social embeddedness around policing careers is fragmented, as specific populations report feeling greater social disapproval from their families and friends if they were to consider a law enforcement career. Individuals' relationships with others significantly impact various aspects of their lives, including career choices (Granovetter, 1973). Nowack and Raffaelli (2022) found that social embeddedness and an individual's support system can cause an individual to seek out specific opportunities and avoid others. Within this study, individuals not in a criminology-related program reported less support from their families, friends and partners regarding the possibility of pursuing a law enforcement career. Individuals who did not have an interest in applying to a law enforcement career reported the same thing. Consistent with Stubbs et al. (2023), this could be a potential reason for the disproportionality seen in the policing field, as individuals are unable to form strong connections with their support networks (Stryker & Serpe, 1994) and build feelings of belonging (Hesketh & Stubbs, 2023). If individuals do not feel supported by their social networks, they may be discouraged from considering a law enforcement career.

Overall, this thesis aimed to examine the nuances and characteristics of young individuals' attitudes towards policing careers, specifically examining how social representation theory and social embeddedness can aid our understanding. The results demonstrated characteristics that were both in line with previous literature and provided new insights. Regarding gender, men were more likely to report that they intended to pursue a career in law enforcement, consistent with previous literature. Regarding race, there was no significant difference in their interest in applying to law enforcement careers. In addition, the older the participants and the further along in their degree, the more likely they were to be interested in pursuing a career in policing. Given these results, it can be concluded that the desire to fulfill one's epistemic and affiliative needs might explain why the various races/ethnicities in this sample appear to have an equal interest in policing careers and why there are still some gender discrepancies. The results also demonstrate a possible fragmentation of social embeddedness around policing careers, as some participants stated they would not necessarily receive support from their families and friends if they pursued a career in law enforcement.

Research Question 3: Impact on Interest in Applying

Participants were asked whether they plan to apply to a law enforcement agency upon completing their current academic program. Roughly 15.5% of participants said yes, 38.8% of participants said they were unsure/ might apply, and 43.8% said they were not going to apply. Based on these statistics, there is limited interest in policing careers within this specific sample. Additionally, a large portion of participants are unsure whether they will pursue a law enforcement career. This study further examined the impact of interest on the various scales included in the questionnaire and found that, as expected, participants who said they were going to apply had higher interest in and a more positive outlook toward a policing career. Participants

who stated they would not apply reported greater apprehension about work-life balance and felt they would face more social disapproval. Interestingly, participants who said they were going to apply and those who said they might apply indicated fewer opportunities for mentorship. A possible explanation is that participants who indicated they would not pursue a career in law enforcement are simply not seeking mentorship opportunities. However, the finding suggests that participants in this sample considering policing careers lack mentorship opportunities, which could prompt them to apply to law enforcement careers. The rather substantial effect sizes of the relationship on these five scales suggest that the same results would be found on a more representative population. In addition, participants who said they would not pursue a career in policing noted that a lack of other job alternatives was a very influential factor in their decision. Meaning that if they could not find employment elsewhere, they might consider a career in law enforcement. Overall, it appears that the nuances and characteristics measured in this study are impacting whether participants have a general interest in a law enforcement career. Participants might lack detailed information about what a policing career entails or be seemingly uninterested. The social representations that have emerged to understand policing careers are not aligned with individual perspectives and values (Rateau et al., 2011). Pursuing a career with policing would not appear to fulfill an individual's epistemic needs and ultimately create more uncertainty about the environment (Bonetto & Lo Monaco, 2018; Bonetto, Pichot et al., 2022). This is especially evident as the field of policing remains relatively unchanged, with a culture rooted in historical and social factors (O'Neill, 2016). Individuals seek career opportunities that align with their values and beliefs. As it stands, it appears that policing careers and the culture of police institutions do not correspond with what young individuals are looking for.

Overall, this thesis aimed to investigate how the nuances and characteristics identified in this study have seemingly influenced interest in pursuing a career in policing. The results demonstrated that interest in a policing career appears low, with a large portion of participants unsure whether they would consider applying. The specific nuances and characteristics identified in this study could result from changes in perspectives and values that are impacting overall interest in a policing career. Individual priorities are shifting, while there appear to be few changes being made to the organizational structure and culture of policing. This disconnect may be contributing to the lack of interest in policing careers and potentially exacerbating the recruitment crisis.

Research Question 4: General Policing versus RCMP

To my knowledge, no previous research has directly compared attitudes towards general policing in Canada with those of the RCMP specifically. While public satisfaction with policing in general has been declining over recent decades, the decline has been more pronounced for the RCMP in particular. Thus, this study examined differences in perceptions to determine whether attitudes were more negative toward the RCMP. Contrary to expectations, there was no difference between general policing and the RCMP when participants were asked about job interest, career outlook, work-life balance, social disapproval, or mentoring opportunities. However, one notable difference was that a lack of other job alternatives was ranked as a more influential factor for those considering a career with the RCMP than for those considering a career with any other agency in Canada. Meaning that if participants in this sample were unable to find employment elsewhere, they would be more influenced to apply to the RCMP over other agencies in the country. However, it is important to consider the specific population of this study when interpreting this result. The RCMP provides policing services for every province and

territory in Canada, except Ontario and Quebec (NSICOP, 2023; Task Force on Governance and Cultural Change in the RCMP, 2007). In Ontario, there are many options for law enforcement, including the Ontario Provincial Police and agencies for various cities across the province. Given that the data was gathered from students at an Ontario university, it is possible that, if interested in a policing career, participants would first consider a law enforcement agency in Ontario. Thus, the RCMP might be viewed as a last resort, given that participants would be sent to detachments in other provinces or territories. If there were a lack of other job alternatives, including at law enforcement agencies in the province of Ontario, participants would consider this influential in their decision to apply specifically to the RCMP. However, this study did not go into detail on why individuals would consider the RCMP in the absence of other job alternatives. Thus, additional research would be needed to determine whether people consider it a last resort. Another notable difference was that the opportunity to help people in the community was a more influential factor for participants when considering a general policing career than when considering one with the RCMP. A similar explanation may be used to interpret this result. Given that the data were gathered from students at an Ontario university, it is possible that a large portion of the participants are from the province. As a result, they might feel a stronger sense of community if they joined the provincial police or a local police force. This sense of community might be lost if participants pursued careers with the RCMP and were assigned to detachments across the country.

When considering the RCMP individually, numerous interesting results were found. Participants were asked why they would or would not consider a career with the RCMP. Regarding why they would apply, participants identified the advancement opportunities and pay as reasons for pursuing a career with the RCMP. However, participants identified the RCMP's

reputation and its relocation requirements⁵ as reasons they would not apply. Given that the data for this study were collected from students at an Ontario university, it is reasonable to assume they may not want to move to another province or territory for their careers. As the RCMP does not provide policing services to municipalities within Ontario, an individual would likely be required to relocate, potentially moving away from family and friends. In addition, as discussed in the literature review, while there has been a decline in support for overall policing, this trend has been more pronounced for the RCMP specifically. As a result, public trust and confidence in the RCMP are lower than those in other law enforcement agencies in Canada (Ruddell, 2022). This decline in overall support and its impact on the RCMP's reputation are causing individuals to be less interested in pursuing a career with the organization. Individuals seem uninterested in being associated with an organization that has a negative reputation across Canada. However, this study did not go into detail regarding why these specific characteristics would impact an individual's decision to apply to the RCMP. Thus, further data would be needed to provide a more concrete explanation.

Another interesting result found is the lack of mentorship or opportunities to learn about a career with the RCMP. Participants who said they would apply to a career with the RCMP and those who said they were unsure/ might apply to the RCMP were more likely to identify a lack of mentorship than other participant groups. One explanation for this result is that the participants in this study were students at an Ontario university. While the RCMP does have its headquarters in Ottawa, it does not provide policing services to any municipalities in Ontario. As a result, individuals, especially those who said they were unsure whether they would apply, might not

⁵ Individuals spend 26-weeks attending the Cadet Training Program located in Regina, Saskatchewan before being stationed at any municipal, provincial or federal posting in Canada (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2025).

have the same access to mentorship opportunities. The RCMP may be implementing various mentorship programs or offering opportunities to learn about a career with the RCMP in municipalities and provinces where it has active police services. Ultimately, further research would be needed to determine why this group of participants believes they do not have access to mentorship opportunities, as well as whether other individuals across the province of Ontario feel the same. However, given the large effect of this relationship in this sample, it is possible that the same result would be found in a more representative population.

The results also revealed that participants not in criminology programs felt they would face greater social disapproval if they pursued a career with the RCMP. Specifically, participants in alternate programs did not think they would receive support from their families, friends and partners if they pursued a career with the RCMP. Individuals not in criminology programs might not be as aware of what a policing career entails. In addition, they might not be as exposed to information about a policing career during their education as criminology students who are actively learning about the police and various criminological concepts. Furthermore, individuals in criminology programs would indirectly expose their family and friends to a greater understanding of policing, which may lead to increased support. Whereas those not in criminology programs and their families might only be aware of law enforcement careers from what's discussed in the news or on social media, possibly leading to decreased support. However, the effect of this relationship on this sample was only small to medium, suggesting that more data would be needed to determine if the impact persists across a more diverse population.

Lastly, another interesting result was that participants who said they were not going to apply to the RCMP rated a lack of other job alternatives as a more influential factor compared to

those who said they were going to apply. This means that if there were no other job alternatives, those who originally stated they would not apply to the RCMP might reconsider. The effect of this result on the sample was medium to large, suggesting that it is quite meaningful. As a result, individuals might view a career with the RCMP as a last resort if they are unable to secure any other employment after completing their studies. While this research project did not go into detail on why this might be the case, it would be worth conducting further research to identify possible explanations. Given the nature of police work, including the extensive training and inherent danger, it is essential to hire individuals who are passionate about the job. Overall, these results identify some specific areas of interest when understanding why individuals might or might not apply to careers with the RCMP.

Overall, this thesis aimed to determine whether there was a difference in the attitudes of young individuals towards policing careers when comparing policing in Canada more generally to the RCMP specifically. The results demonstrated that there was no significant difference between young individuals' attitudes towards policing careers generally versus with the RCMP. However, the RCMP appears to become of interest to individuals if there are no other job alternatives. This could be due to the RCMP's reputation and relocation requirements, which individuals identified as reasons for not applying.

Policy Implications

Although it is not the objective of this thesis to resolve the policing recruitment crisis, the results point towards specific policy interventions that could encourage youth to pursue policing careers or help police institutions optimize retention. One important area that police organizations could improve is their mentoring programs. Data from this study revealed that participants who said they planned to pursue a policing career and those who were unsure or

might consider applying reported fewer mentorship opportunities than those who said they would not apply. This is true when participants were asked about a policing career in general, as well as with the RCMP specifically. This finding may be because participants who do not intend to pursue policing careers are not seeking mentorship opportunities, so this was not a concern for them. However, the results suggest that greater access to mentorship opportunities would benefit individuals considering policing careers. If police organizations want to increase their recruitment, they should consider creating targeted mentorship programs. Ensuring individuals can learn about what a policing career entails and to ask specific questions would make a difference in their decision to apply. However, this study did not examine which mentorship programs might be most helpful for young individuals. Instead, it examined whether participants thought mentorship programs or the opportunity to ask someone about a law enforcement career would affect their decision to apply. As a result, this presents a weakness in this study and offers opportunities for further research. Understanding the types of mentorship opportunities most helpful to those considering a law enforcement career could inform how police agencies create targeted programs.

Another area that police organizations could improve is the overall reputation of law enforcement in Canada. Participants identified reputation and their perspectives on a police organization and its culture as among the biggest barriers to their decision to apply. This is true when participants considered policing careers generally as well as the RCMP specifically. While changes to police culture have been slow (Rigaux & Cunningham, 2020), police organizations should continue to strive for improvements to attract more young applicants. When considering the reputation of police organizations in Canada, it is also essential to examine the data on social disapproval. Participants who said they were not going to apply, as well as those not in a

criminology-specific program, indicated they would face greater disapproval from their friends and family if they became a police officer. This is true for participants not in a criminology-specific program, both when considering policing careers more generally and when considering the RCMP specifically. Although this study did not investigate why these groups indicated they would face more disapproval, one reason this might be true is due to the reputation of policing in Canada. If police organizations had a better reputation and a more inclusive culture, individuals might experience more support and approval from their families and friends for pursuing law enforcement careers. As a result, police organizations might experience higher recruitment rates. While this presents a weakness in this research study, it also provides an opportunity for further research to deepen the understanding of the phenomenon.

Concerns about work-life balance offer another avenue for police organizations to enhance their recruitment efforts. Participants who indicated they did not want to pursue a policing career generally or with the RCMP, those in non-criminology-specific programs, and younger participants reported greater apprehension about work-life balance. They believed they would not have the opportunity to raise a family and spend time with their families. In addition, they believed they would be overworked and overstressed if they pursued a career in policing. Law enforcement careers are indeed unique due to the inherent dangers and stress of the job, as well as the shift work requirements. However, if police organizations are more transparent regarding their day-to-day activities and the broader impacts on society, more young individuals might see it as a viable career choice.

Finally, to better inform recruitment and retention efforts, police organizations need to be aware of the participants who indicated that they would apply to a policing career as a last resort. Participants who indicated they were not going to pursue a career in policing identified a lack of

other job opportunities as a very influential factor in their decision. This is true when participants considered law enforcement careers more generally, as well as with the RCMP specifically. In fact, the rate at which participants identified this as an influential factor was higher among the RCMP than among other police agencies in Canada. This means that a potentially significant portion of individuals are applying because there are no other job opportunities. Not only does this impact recruitment, but it also raises substantial concerns about police officer retention. Given the nature of the job, training is extensive and costly, often requiring significant time and money to ensure individuals are prepared for the realities of the position. However, if individuals decide to leave and pursue alternate careers as they become available, this can create financial concerns and issues with the hierarchical structure. As a result, it may be worthwhile for law enforcement agencies to adapt their recruitment practices to ensure they target individuals who genuinely want to become police officers. By modifying various stages of their application process to address this phenomenon, police organizations may be more likely to ensure they are hiring individuals who are more passionate about a career in law enforcement and view it as their first choice.

Chapter VI: Looking Toward the Future of Police Recruitment

The current thesis provides insight into the nuances and characteristics of young individuals' attitudes towards law enforcement careers. It also examined whether there was a difference in these attitudes when considering policing careers more generally in Canada, compared to those of the RCMP specifically. Overall, the results were varied. Some results were consistent with previous literature, while others provided unique insights that filled gaps in the existing literature. Interest in policing careers among this population was relatively low, with many individuals unsure whether they would apply to a law enforcement agency. Contrary to predictions, there was no significant difference in the majority of the items measured between general policing careers and the RCMP specifically. In addition, some noteworthy differences were found among race/ethnicity, age, and program, providing further insight into how young individuals perceive policing careers. For example, no differences were found among races/ethnicities in this sample regarding overall interest and outlook in law enforcement careers. Younger participants and those in non-criminology-related programs reported greater apprehension around work-life balance. Participants who said they would apply to a law enforcement career, as well as those who were unsure about applying, reported having fewer mentorship opportunities, both in general policing and specifically with the RCMP. These results demonstrate that the perspectives and values of young individuals are changing, which may be contributing to the recruitment crisis that many police agencies in Canada are experiencing. Overall, the results offer insight into how young individuals perceive policing careers and what this may mean for recruitment and retention. The data also offer avenues for future research that would deepen our understanding of these nuances and characteristics.

Limitations and Future Directions

As with any research of this nature, the current thesis has its limitations, which ultimately pave the way for future research. Firstly, it's important to consider the specific sample used for this study and its generalizability to all young individuals in Canada. Data was collected from students at a university in Ottawa, Canada. While the sample size was robust, the decision to use convenience sampling raises questions about generalizability to the larger population. As a result, findings may differ from those obtained from universities in other towns/provinces and from other sources, such as college programs. Conducting future research across different population groups would provide a better understanding of young individuals' attitudes toward law enforcement careers.

Another important limitation to consider is that the data from this study currently provide only a snapshot of attitudes towards policing careers. Previous literature has identified a decline in overall support for the police over the past few decades (Angus Reid Institute, 2020a; Ruddell, 2022). Due to the recruitment crisis currently inflicting police agencies across Canada, it can be assumed that perceptions of those considering a career in policing have also been declining. However, the current dataset only provides a snapshot of how university-aged individuals perceive a career in policing at present. Thus, it might be helpful to conduct a similar study in the future to assess how young individuals' attitudes are changing. As there is currently an emphasis on developing targeted recruitment strategies and campaigns to attract future police officers⁶,

⁶ Various organizations in Canada are creating targeted recruitment campaigns with the goal of inspiring the next generation of police officers. The Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police recently launched a recruitment campaign titled "Answer the Call" (Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, 2023).

determining whether attitudes among this population shift over time would be valuable information.

Some of the specific results in this study opened avenues for future research. Firstly, there was a significant amount of data indicating that certain groups lack mentorship opportunities in policing. Participants who said they were interested in applying to a law enforcement career and those who said they were unsure/ might apply reported a lack of mentorship opportunities. This finding was true when participants considered general policing careers as well as ones with the RCMP specifically. This raises questions about what mentorship opportunities other groups might be experiencing that these groups are lacking, what type of mentorship they are seeking, and what they hope to gain from these opportunities. The current thesis did not investigate the specifics of mentorship programs. Thus, future research on this topic could provide insights that help participants become more confident in pursuing a career in law enforcement.

A second avenue for future research concerns participants who stated they might apply if no other job alternatives were available. When comparing results from general policing to the RCMP specifically, a lack of other job alternatives was a more influential factor for the RCMP. It was also a more influential factor for those who said they were not going to apply to a policing career, generally or specifically to the RCMP. This means that many participants in various categories would consider careers in law enforcement if they were unable to find employment elsewhere. While the current study did not investigate why this is the case, future research could further explore this by identifying which aspects of policing make it a last resort for individuals. Further research into this phenomenon is particularly important when considering the training and retention of future police officers.

A third avenue for future research involves conducting a study of the nuances and characteristics of policing careers using a larger, more representative sample. As previously discussed, data for this study were collected through convenience sampling from students at a university in Ottawa, Canada. Thus, it only provides an idea of how this sample perceives policing as a career. To better understand of young individuals' perceptions of law enforcement careers, future research could survey students at universities or colleges in other provinces and territories. Not only would this provide a general understanding of how youth in Canada perceive policing careers, but it could also help explain any differences or similarities across provinces and territories.

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Appendix A – Brightspace Post

Volunteers needed for law enforcement careers study, an MA research project under the supervision of Dr. Michael Kempa.

This research project is about career aspirations of young individuals interested in law enforcement and seeks to examine the nuances of pursuing a career in this field. You will be asked to complete a survey, answering some questions about law enforcement careers in Canada with various agencies in addition to questions about perceptions and attitudes associated with policing careers.

This questionnaire will take place online and should take approximately 20 minutes to complete. No compensation will be provided. Participation is voluntary, and all data will be anonymous.

If interested, please click on the link below to begin:

<https://www.surveymonkey.ca/r/J9CDV9H>

Thank you in advance for participating in this research!

Kaila Sherratt, MA Student

Appendix B – Informed Consent Form

Title of the study: Interested in a career in law enforcement? Understanding Perceptions of Policing Careers

Name of Principal Investigator: Kaila Sherratt, MA Student

Affiliation: Department of Criminology, Faculty of Social Science, University of Ottawa

Name of Supervisor: Michael Kempa, Associate Professor

Affiliation: Department of Criminology, Faculty of Social Science, University of Ottawa

Invitation to Participate: I am invited to participate in the above mentioned research study conducted by Kaila Sherratt for the purposes of her Master's Thesis, under the supervision of Professor Michael Kempa.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to analyze trends among young individuals considering a career with law enforcement. One of the research objectives is to gain a better understanding of the perceptions and feelings individuals have towards careers in policing. Another research objective is to compare these perceptions and feelings of policing in general within a Canadian context to that of the RCMP specifically.

Participation: My participations will consist of completing an online questionnaire. During this questionnaire, I will be asked to provide some basic demographic information. I will be asked about my interest in a career in law enforcement and which agencies I have considered a career with (if any). In addition, I will be asked to provide responses to six (6) scales regarding attitudes and resistances towards law enforcement careers in general. Further, I will be asked to provide responses to the same six (6) scales with a focus on a career with the RCMP specifically.

Risks: My participation in this study will entail that I disclose information about my perspectives regarding law enforcement careers in Canada. I am aware that I have the option to refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study completely if I do not want to provide certain information.

Benefits: My participation in this study will add to the scholarly literature on motivations and barriers regarding careers in law enforcement. Learning about the attitudes young individuals have towards policing careers and what might be causing a shift in these attitudes could provide police organizations with information to create targeted recruitment efforts.

Confidentiality and Privacy I have received assurance from the researchers that the information I will share will remain strictly confidential. I understand that the contents will be used only for the purposes of a master's thesis and that my identity will be protected through the anonymization of my responses. I will not be asked to provide any personal information such as my name or contact information.

To minimize the risk of security breaches and to help ensure my confidentiality, it is recommended that I use standard safety measures, such as signing out of my account, closing my browser, and locking my device when I am no longer using it/when I have completed the study.

Conservation of Data: The electronic data collected (including consent forms and survey responses) will be uploaded to a password protected computer and deleted off the collection platform (i.e., Qualtrics). Further, the electronic data will be only accessible to those (i.e., the principal investigator) who have the password for the computer. The data will be conserved for 5 years.

Voluntary Participation: I am under no obligation to participate and if I choose to participate, I can withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions, without suffering any negative consequences.

While I may withdrawal from the study at any time, it is important to note that, once I submit my responses, I will be unable to withdrawal my data. Given the anonymity of the survey, the researcher will be unable to retrace individual datasets.

If I have any questions about the study, I may contact the researcher or their supervisor. If I have any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this study, I may contact the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity via email (ethics@uottawa.ca) or telephone (613-562-5800 ext. 5387).

It is recommended that I save a copy of this consent form for my records.

I have read the above form and hereby **consent** to participate in this research study.

- Yes, I want to participate.
- No, I do not want to participate.

Appendix C – Demographics Questionnaire

Age:

- 17-19 years
- 20-22 years
- 23-26 years
- 26 years or older
- Prefer not to answer

Gender:

- Woman
- Man
- Gender-nonconforming
- Prefer not to answer
- Other: _____

Race/ Ethnicity:

- White
- Indigenous
- Hispanic or Latino
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Prefer not to answer
- Other: _____

What program are you in? (open ended question)

What year of your program are you in?

1. 1st Year
2. 2nd Year
3. 3rd Year
4. 4th Year
5. 5th Year +

Appendix D – Career Aspirations

Have you ever applied to become a police officer with a law enforcement agency in Ontario?

1. Yes
2. No

If yes, please state which ones:

- Ontario Provincial Police
- Ottawa Police Service
- Toronto Police Service
- Other, specify: _____

Have you ever applied to be a uniformed officer with the RCMP?

- Yes
- No

Do you plan on applying to a law enforcement agency upon completion of your current academic program?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Unsure/ Maybe

If yes to the above question, are you considering applying to the RCMP specifically?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

1. If yes/ maybe, why are you considering applying to the RCMP (check all that apply)?

- The RCMP offers ample opportunity for advancement
- I would be able to achieve good work-life balance
- The RCMP pays well
- The RCMPs prestige/ reputation
- Opportunity for relocation within Canada
- Training protocol
- Other, please specify: _____

2. If no, why are you not considering applying to the RCMP (check all that apply)?

- The RCMP does not offer opportunity for advancement
- I would not be able to achieve good work-life balance
- The RCMP does not pay well
- The RCMPs prestige/ reputation
- Opportunity for relocation within Canada
- Training protocol

- Other, please specify: _____

What qualities are important when you consider a career in policing?

- Opportunities for advancement
- Job pay and benefits
- The opportunities to help people in the community
- Job security
- The prestige of the organization
- Job location
- Training requirements
- Other, please specify: _____

What are the biggest barriers that would impact your decision to pursue a career in policing?

- Lack of familial/ friend support
- The culture of a police organization
- The perspective/ view of a police organization
- Training requirements
- Job pay and benefits
- Other, please specify: _____

Thinking about a career in policing in general, please answer the following questions:

Job Interest and Procedural Justice Measures (rated from 1–5, Strongly disagree to Strongly agree)

1. For me, a job with a law enforcement agency would be a good place to work.
2. I would not be interested in a job with a law enforcement agency except as a last resort (reverse scored).
3. A job with a law enforcement agency is attractive to me as a place for employment.
4. I am interested in learning more about a career as a police officer.
5. A job as a police officer is very appealing to me.

Career Outlook (coded on a five-point scale: 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree)

1. I will find a job with a law enforcement agency rewarding
2. A job with a law enforcement agency will permit me to decide on my own how to do the job
3. I know what is expected of me as a police officer
4. At work, my opinions will count for something
5. At work, I will have the opportunity to learn and grow as a person
6. Working with a law enforcement agency in Canada offers me opportunities for advancement
7. If new skills are required to do my job, I have access to opportunities to develop them
8. I have the knowledge, skills, and abilities I need to perform as a police officer effectively

The Reasons Questionnaire (Using a Likert three-point rating scale, recruits were asked to rate the degree of influence of each factor: “no influence,” “some influence,” or “very influential” (values of 1, 2, and 3, respectively)).

1. Opportunities for advancement
2. Structured like the military
3. Early retirement with good pay
4. The excitement of the work
5. It provides an opportunity to help people in the community
6. Job security
7. To fight crime
8. The profession has prestige
9. You work on your own a lot; have a good deal of autonomy
10. To enforce the laws of society
11. The job pays well
12. Good companionship with your co-workers
13. Because you had friends/ relatives who were police officers
14. The job carries power and authority
15. There was a lack of other job alternatives

Work-life Balance Apprehension (5 Likert scale; 1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = disagree, and 5 = strongly disagree)

1. A police patrol career would provide me a good opportunity to raise a family
2. Patrol schedules would not allow me to spend time with my family (reverse coded)

3. Patrol work is too stressful (reverse coded)
4. I would be overworked in a police patrol career (reverse coded)

Social Disapproval (5 Likert scale; 1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = disagree, and 5 = strongly disagree)

1. My family would not approve of me becoming a police officer (reverse coded)
2. My friends would not approve of me becoming a police officer (reverse coded)
3. My spouse or significant other would not approve of me becoming a police officer (reverse coded)

For this scale, higher values indicate less social approval for entering a police patrol career.

Lack of Mentoring (5 Likert scale; 1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = disagree, and 5 = strongly disagree)

1. Having a mentor would make a difference in helping me choose a law enforcement career (reverse coded)
2. I want to know more about law enforcement careers, but I have never been able to ask anyone about it (reverse coded)
3. I have never had an opportunity to figure out what a law enforcement career is really like (reverse coded)

For this measure, higher values indicate less mentoring and opportunities to learn about patrol work.

Thinking about a career with the RCMP specifically, please answer the following questions:

Job Interest and Procedural Justice Measures (rated from 1–5, Strongly disagree to Strongly agree)

1. For me, a job with the RCMP would be a good place to work.
2. I would not be interested in a job with the RCMP except as a last resort (reverse scored).
3. A job with the RCMP is attractive to me as a place for employment.
4. I am interested in learning more about a career as an RCMP officer.
5. A job as an RCMP officer is very appealing to me.

Career Outlook (coded on a five-point scale: 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree)

1. I will find a job with the RCMP rewarding; this job will permit me to decide on my own how to do the job
2. I know what is expected of me as an RCMP officer
3. At work, my opinions will count for something
4. At work, I will have the opportunity to learn and grow as a person
5. Working with the RCMP offers me opportunities for advancement
6. If new skills are required to do my job, I have access to opportunities to develop them
7. I have the knowledge, skills, and abilities I need to perform as an RCMP officer effectively

The Reasons Questionnaire (Using a Likert three-point rating scale, recruits were asked to rate the degree of influence of each factor: “no influence,” “some influence,” or “very influential” (values of 1, 2, and 3, respectively)).

1. Opportunities for advancement
2. Structured like the military
3. Early retirement with good pay
4. The excitement of the work
5. It provides an opportunity to help people in the community
6. Job security
7. To fight crime
8. The profession has prestige
9. You work on your own a lot; have a good deal of autonomy
10. To enforce the laws of society
11. The job pays well
12. Good companionship with your co-workers
13. Because you had friends/ relatives who were police officers
14. The job carries power and authority
15. There was a lack of other job alternatives

Work-life Balance Apprehension (5 Likert scale; 1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = disagree, and 5 = strongly disagree)

1. A career with the RCMP would provide me a good opportunity to raise a family
2. Patrol schedules would not allow me to spend time with my family (reverse coded)
3. Patrol work is too stressful (reverse coded)
4. I would be overworked in career with the RCMP (reverse coded)

Social Disapproval (5 Likert scale; 1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = disagree, and 5 = strongly disagree)

1. My family would not approve of me becoming an RCMP officer (reverse coded)
2. My friends would not approve of me becoming an RCMP officer (reverse coded)
3. My spouse or significant other would not approve of me becoming an RCMP officer (reverse coded)

For this scale, higher values indicate less social approval for entering a police patrol career.

Lack of Mentoring (5 Likert scale; 1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = disagree, and 5 = strongly disagree)

1. Having a mentor would make a difference in helping me choose a career with the RCMP (reverse coded)
2. I want to know more about careers with the RCMP, but I have never been able to ask anyone about it (reverse coded)
3. I have never had an opportunity to figure out what a career with the RCMP is really like (reverse coded)

For this measure, higher values indicate less mentoring and opportunities to learn about patrol work.

Appendix E – Debriefing Form

What are we trying to learn in this research?

The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the attitudes and resistances young individuals have towards careers in law enforcement. As participants you were asked to answer questions about your attitudes towards policing careers in general. You were then asked the same questions when considering careers with the RCMP specifically. In addition to being interested in general nuances and characteristics, we are also interested in comparing them with the RCMP specifically as they have been particularly impacted by the recruitment crisis.

Why is this important to scientists or to the public?

There is a vast amount of literature examining the motivations and barriers of women, racialized individuals, and members of the LGBTQ community regarding careers in law enforcement. However, there is limited research on the attitudes young individuals have when considering careers in policing. This research is important because it will address the gaps in the literature and provide a better understanding of young people's perspectives around law enforcement careers.

Where can I learn more?

Lester, D. (1983). Why do people become police officers: A study of reasons and their predictions of success. *Journal of Police Science and Administration*, 11(2), 170 – 174.

National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians. (2023). *Special report on the federal policing mandate of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police*.

<https://www.nsicopcpsnr.ca/reports/rp-2023-11-fp/intro-en.html>

Ruddell, R. (2022). The changing context of Canadian policing: An examination of public's perceptions after 2020. *Journal of Community Safety & Well-Being*, 7(2), 47-52.

<http://doi.org/10.35502/jcswb.260>

What if I have questions later?

If you wish to discuss this research any further feel free to contact Kaila Sherratt (Criminology Department, MA Student, Principal Investigator).

At this time, we would like to thank you for taking the time to take part in this study. Your participation has been greatly appreciated!

Appendix F – Ethics Approval Notice

Université d'Ottawa

Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche

University of Ottawa

Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

24/02/2025

CERTIFICAT D'APPROBATION ÉTHIQUE | CERTIFICATE OF ETHICS APPROVAL

Numéro du dossier / Ethics File Number	S-02-25-11125
Titre du projet / Project Title	Interested in a career in law enforcement? Understanding Perceptions of Policing Careers
Type de projet / Project Type	Thèse de maîtrise / Master's thesis
Statut du projet / Project Status	Approuvé / Approved
Date d'approbation (jj/mm/aaaa) / Approval Date (dd/mm/yyyy)	24/02/2025
Date d'expiration (jj/mm/aaaa) / Expiry Date (dd/mm/yyyy)	23/02/2026

Équipe de recherche / Research Team

Chercheur / Researcher	Affiliation	Role
Kaila SHERRATT	Département de criminologie / Department of Criminology	Chercheur Principal / Principal Investigator
Michael KEMPA	Département de criminologie / Department of Criminology	Superviseur / Supervisor

Conditions spéciales ou commentaires / Special conditions or comments

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24/02/2025

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Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche

University of Ottawa

Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

Le Comité d'éthique de la recherche (CÉR) de l'Université d'Ottawa, opérant conformément à l'*Énoncé de politique des Trois conseils* (2014) et toutes autres lois et tous règlements applicables, a examiné et approuvé la demande d'éthique du projet de recherche ci-nommé.

L'approbation est valide pour la durée indiquée plus haut et est sujette aux conditions énumérées dans la section intitulée "Conditions Spéciales ou Commentaires". Le formulaire « Renouvellement ou Fermeture de Projet » doit être complété quatre semaines avant la date d'échéance indiquée ci-haut afin de demander un renouvellement de cette approbation éthique ou afin de fermer le dossier.

Toutes modifications apportées au projet doivent être approuvées par le CÉR avant leur mise en place, sauf si le participant doit être retiré en raison d'un danger immédiat ou s'il s'agit d'un changement ayant trait à des éléments administratifs ou logistiques du projet. Les chercheurs doivent aviser le CÉR dans les plus brefs délais de tout changement pouvant augmenter le niveau de risque aux participants ou pouvant affecter considérablement le déroulement du projet, rapporter tout événement imprévu ou indésirable et soumettre toute nouvelle information pouvant nuire à la conduite du projet ou à la sécurité des participants.

The University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board, which operates in accordance with the *Tri-Council Policy Statement* (2014) and other applicable laws and regulations, has examined and approved the ethics application for the above-named research project.

Ethics approval is valid for the period indicated above and is subject to the conditions listed in the section entitled "Special Conditions or Comments". The "Renewal/Project Closure" form must be completed four weeks before the above-referenced expiry date to request a renewal of this ethics approval or closure of the file.

Any changes made to the project must be approved by the REB before being implemented, except when necessary to remove participants from immediate endangerment or when the modification(s) only pertain to administrative or logistical components of the project. Investigators must also promptly alert the REB of any changes that increase the risk to participant(s), any changes that considerably affect the conduct of the project, all unanticipated and harmful events that occur, and new information that may negatively affect the conduct of the project or the safety of the participant(s).

Mathieu LAFLAMME

Responsable d'éthique en recherche / Protocol Officer

Pour/For **Barbara GRAVES** Président(e) du/ Chair of the **Comité d'éthique de la recherche en sciences sociales et humanités / Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Board**

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