Born to be Blue?

The Constructing of Canadian Police Officers' Identity

A White Paper Prepared for the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police

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Executive Summary

Police officers in Canada are part of a unique profession, which provides them with extraordinary powers granted by the state to maintain public order and enforce laws. As Canadian society changes, so do public expectations for police officers and services. While policing, like any public institution, is expected to change in order to meet these expectations, police officers – the face of policing to ordinary citizens – find themselves embedded in a deeply-rooted and unique police culture that remains anchored to traditional occupational norms and values that are often resistant to change. Inevitably, a crisis of identity occurs when officers feel the strong and persistent pull of an often-outdated police culture while the profession seeks to promote community policing and enhance collaborative values that meet today's public safety needs. This can cause significant stress for officers in terms of their personal values and professional/personal identity.

This study discusses the results of research which examined identity construction for police officers: how identity is constructed and reinforced within and by police culture to create the idea of what it means to be a police officer. It also considers what opportunities might exist to change the culture's values and norms to make the profession more equitable, diverse, and inclusive.

Starting with the "pain points" that face the profession and specifically police leaders who are expected to lead changes in their organizations, the study considers the factors that make up police culture, work, and power. Further, it considers how police officers engage in identity construction.

The Study

This study explored how police officers construct meaning through "discourse" – the language of policing – which can be verbal, written, or visual in form. Police discourses are based on the language used in recruiting and training officers within the law enforcement workplace, and the cultural and

organizational practices specific to the policing profession. How and why specific language is used within the profession is crucial in helping define what it means to be a police officer.

This study is based on data from an analysis of semi-structured interviews with 30 currently serving police officers from four Canadian police services. It considers how the language of policing is used to construct the identities of police officers vis-à-vis their positions in their police organization, their profession, and in relation to the work they do. Responses to the interview questions were thematically analyzed.

Summary of Key Findings

The study data showed that police officers have varied and rich experiences in constructing their professional identities. A number of themes emerged from the interviews in the areas of:

- **Policing as a calling/service:** Some participants viewed their role as police officers as that of service to their fellow citizens, indicating that they felt a deep attachment to public service.

- **Policing as "the job":** Some participants described their policing role as being simply what they do; less a calling and more their profession/job.

- **The influence of family, friends, and professional influencers:** Participants indicated that they were susceptible to what people close to them, or those perceived as mentors, thought about their intentions to enter the police profession or (having entered the profession) how they performed as police officers.

- **The importance of training in identity construction/maintenance:** The transmission of professional knowledge and development of unique skills (as law enforcers) emerged as a critical component in how participants constructed their professional identities,

initially upon entering the profession and subsequently as they progressed in the various stages of their careers.

- **Police professionalism and socialization:** While policing is not a "profession" in the traditional sense of the term and does not have to maintain professional accreditation as other professionals such as doctors, nurses, or engineers do (but do have mandatory requalification in some skilled areas such as firearms), participants clearly saw themselves as "police professionals". They experienced a process of socialization, which emphasizes the uniqueness of being a police officer.

- **The impact of personal, professional, and organizational values on police officers and their professional identities:** Participants indicated that they are subjected to the influence of unique values on three levels: the personal, the professional, and in relation to others within their organizations. These values interact to produce workplace experiences that are particular to police officers, including the sense of solidarity among officers, socializing within police circles, and the influence of workplace factors such as rank, hierarchy, and command-and-control systems that shape police identities.

- **Prospects for culture change within the profession:** Change was seen to be slow but needed by participants. While participants generally agreed that policing must evolve and change, what change should entail and for what purposes (e.g., support/protect officers; promote equity and diversity within the workplace, etc.) differed among participants.

- **Management and labour issues:** Conflict between senior police managers, frontline officers. and their union representatives is a well-established factor in law enforcement. Chiefs of Police and other senior leaders face increased organizational and public

pressures in such areas as budgets, service delivery, and supporting members' health and well-being. Frontline officers also face significant challenges in terms of the occupational stresses involved in a dangerous profession, changing demands from the public and governments on police as a publicly funded service, media, community scrutiny, etc.

- **Professional pride:** Participants generally expressed immense pride in being police officers and attached importance not just to their role as law enforcers, but to the objectives of policing in terms of promoting public safety. Police officers maintain a sense of pride in putting on the uniform, the symbols and rituals of the profession, and the importance of "having each other's back" and the solidarity involved in being a police officer.

Key Issues for Consideration

Based on the findings which emerged from the interviews, a number of areas are identified for the consideration of Canadian police leaders regarding the challenges faced by police officers in relation to their identity construction today:

Guardians Versus Warriors

Police officers' self-identification is constructed from the time they are recruited, trained and what they experience through their daily workplace experiences and interactions. Power relations permeate police structure (e.g., rank, hierarchy, policies, and procedures that must be followed, etc.).

The debate within policing about what policing is and how it should be carried out is fundamentally about power – who wields it, who disciplines police members, who decide how police are trained, promoted, etc. Power thus plays an essential role in the building of officers' identity.

In contemporary policing, there is a debate within police organizations (frontline officers, their unions, senior leaders and managers, etc.) as to whether police officers are expected to be "guardians" or "warriors". This debate questions the fundamental role(s) of police officers. The debate naturally centres on key aspects of identity-building of a police officer through the consideration of appropriate training, education, policies, workplace supports, etc., that influence the workplace experiences of officers and how they perceive their roles within complex police organizations.

Addressing the Management-Union Divide

Many participants in this study described a "gap" between senior managers and frontline officers. Police unions have and continue to play an important role in policing by effectively representing their members' interests regarding salaries, benefits, protecting health, safety, and well-being, representing officers facing discipline, etc. Police unions have also challenged traditional hierarchies, which typically concentrate on workplace power within the hands of the Chiefs of Police and senior managers and enjoy significant political power[1][2]. Canadian police unions have successfully constrained police management power through collective bargaining. Their success in labour relations and as a powerful political entity means that police unions have the potential to constitute themselves as, "active, forward-thinking social agencies within policing networking arrangements"[3]. In turn, police managers must recognize the need to work with police unions when it comes to organizational and operational change (including how police officers perceive their professional lives). This is critically important in relation to the discourse of policing and identity-building.

Recruitment Considerations

Participants in this study agreed that recruiting new police officers who bring the skills required in today's complex and changing social environment is important to the overall effectiveness of police organizations. Most also agreed that a diverse policing profession reflecting Canadian communities' diversity is essential. However, given that most Canadian police officers remain overwhelmingly white and male, this translates into perceived or actual resistance to diversity efforts and culture change in the police culture. In fact, when it comes to personal background, most officers maintain a "blue" identity, where their occupational training and workplace socialization by their fellow officers supersedes their own personal background and identity in relation to interaction with individuals. This

indicates how powerful a hold the police culture has on officers through shared beliefs such as police work being "dangerous" and promoting suspicion of those outside the profession.

When it comes to recruitment, participants offered insights into what effective recruitment strategies might include, including: utilizing the power of candidates' families and loved ones in the recruiting process, having police organizations speak with a common voice about what policing is and what being a police officer means; and addressing law enforcement's uncomfortable past when developing grand narratives about what policing is and is not.

Making Police Training and Education a National Issue

This study found that police education and training play a significant role in shaping police officers' identity. From the start of their recruitment process to the initial and subsequent ongoing training of police officers, the training that officers receive and experience informs their professional sense of who they are and what their role as law enforcers involves. Training also mattered to participants, illustrated by their responses to questions regarding their initial and subsequent training, mentorship, promotional opportunities, etc. However, the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police's (CACP) 2021-2023 list of priority issues does not list training and education among its goals. The discussion about training needs for police officers would benefit from a national voice that can support provincial and local police efforts to address training issues to reflect public priorities.

Officer Wellness

Closely related to training and education in the shaping of the police officer's sense of self is their sense of well-being. The job of a police officer exposes them to long and often rotating schedule shifts, constant exposure to violence, hypervigilance on the officer's part, and the perceived lack of public support for the work they do [5][6][7][8]. Officers develop mental health issues at a greater rate than

the public[9], estimated at 12 to 18 percent of all Canadian officers compared to 8% of the general

population[10], as well as bouts of depression, family strife, substance abuse, and attempted suicides [11] [12]

[13]. As police officers confront the mental stressors of the job, contemporary police training must place

greater emphasis on officer well-being as a means to assisting them in accomplishing their professional

goals. Training and workplace discussions that stress the dangers of the job and solidarity with fellow

officers to ensure their physical safety need to be balanced by honest discussions that stress the need to

confront the stigma of the warrior mentality entrenched in policing training curriculum.

Potential Areas for Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police (CACP) Support

In regard to what the CACP can do to support police services' recruitment initiatives,

participants suggested that the role of the CACP should be to support efforts at the local police service

level and broadly across the police sector to make policing a career of choice. Further, the emphasis

should be on equity and inclusion, critical thinking, community-focused policing, and changing the

way police identity is communicated through training and other materials.

Police Training

Traditional recruit training in policing was (and still is) based on an apprenticeship model that

includes short-duration classroom instruction in a police college/academy, in-service instruction, and

on-the-job learning from experienced officers (e.g., Coach Officers)[14]. Training not only prepares

officers to do their jobs, but also socializes them into a way of thinking and acting. Training is,

therefore, a key tool in the transfer of knowledge to officers.

While police organizations are now incorporating and emphasizing training in such areas of

building community resiliency through community policing and crime prevention, police training

continues to legitimize a competitive, masculine outlook that emphasizes traditional crime-fighting

skills[15]. This is partly due to the fact that policing exposes officers to dangers when responding to real or potential criminal acts. It also constantly exposes police officers to a unique police culture characterized by hypermasculinity, which refers to an exaggerated masculinity in which physical aggression and violence are valued and in which femininity, sexuality and gender diversity, and homosexuality in particular are feared, belittled, and devalued[16][17].

Training sets the groundwork for identity-building for police officers. Common training standards across Canada that reflect the policing needs of communities (including leaving room for local considerations to be considered, e.g., Indigenous communities) would significantly impact identity-building processes for Canadian police officers.

Officer Wellness

There is a growing awareness about the important role of mental health in the professional experiences of police officers, both in dealing with citizens suffering a mental health crisis and with police organizations [18][19]. Many participants in this study supported a greater emphasis by police organizations on addressing mental health issues and stigma, supporting officers in their work, and empowering police members, which are all connected to overall workplace wellness.

The impact of mental illness, including post-traumatic stress disorder, has an obvious impact on how officers view their work and their identity as police officers. However, the greater awareness of mental health issues in policing contrasts with the "strong, professional norm"[20] that is still emphasized at every level of policing training and retains the traditional emphasis on crime fighting skills. This further reinforces the power structure of policing and the warrior mentality.

Introduction

Canadian police officers are sworn peace officers who are authorized by state authorities (federal, provincial, and municipal) to enforce laws passed by the state[21]. While contemporary research into the role of police officers has generally focused on the power structures that enable police to enforce laws and, more recently, on whether police organizations should exist in their current forms[22] [23][24], less focus has been placed on how the identity of police officers is constructed and maintained through a deeply-rooted police culture on which that power exists (and which perpetuates tradition-bound policing practices).

The police culture retains influence over police professionals and their sense of professional identity. In particular, police "solidarity" can construct exclusionary boundaries between police members and the rest of society, encourage antagonism toward those in the public defined as "outsiders" by creating worker-group solidarity and cynicism toward "outsiders" (e.g., members of the public, elected officials, the media), and foster a sense of social isolation among police officers[25][26]. However, Dick and Jankowicz[27] argued that the culture in policing is complex and socially constructed

in nature and not something that is simply held by individual officers in isolation. Instead, it is a more resounding theme operating throughout all levels of the organization.

Policing as a public service is facing significant external and internal pressures to change. Increasing demands for service driven by social and structural inequalities, technological advances, and financial constraints are causing police leaders to reconsider the skills and capabilities of officers required to meet these changing public expectations[28]; for example, police officers are increasingly being called to respond to social issues such as mental health, poverty, and addictions (sometimes in cooperation with other service delivery agencies and the community, but often on their own) for which they have traditionally not been trained to deal with. This requires police officers to act as social workers as well as law enforcers. Such pressures to meet public expectations conflict with the very power basis of law enforcement, which has fundamentally positioned officers as crime fighters rather than social service providers. Further, members of racialized groups who have experienced oppression from police in the past are increasingly vocal about the need to fundamentally re-think policing both as a profession and also as a public service. So, too, are certain groups within policing (e.g., individuals who identify as women, racialized members, and 2SLGBTQ+ members) who have generally been excluded from the overwhelmingly white, heterosexist, cisgender, male cultural structure of policing[29] [30] [31].

Despite these contemporary pressures, power and knowledge continue to be ingrained in the professional identity of the police recruit and enforced at the police academy to promote a common law enforcer's sense of identity. This is done by emphasizing a strict police organizational hierarchy, paramilitary teaching structures, physical training, and carried on through subsequent in-service training and other mandatory and specialized training[32] [33] [34] [35]. Police training involves the transfer of knowledge regarding organizational, professional, and personal values and attitudes and acts as an

influencer as to what it means to be a police officer. Informal interaction, mentoring by other police officers, and the continued emphasis on in-group solidarity remain vital to identity-building for police officers and act to further engrain policing's traditionally conservative values and attitudes.

Because of these challenges and pressures, police organizations are placing greater emphasis on diversifying police organizations[36][37]. However, issues such as systemic racism, police brutality, and the militarization of police[38][39][40][41] continue to undermine efforts to diversify the profession. Police officers continue to be recruited to fit into a desired police officer mold, or what Conti[42] called the "organisational ideal" where police recruits must suspend their civilian identity as soon as they begin the process of becoming a sworn police officer. This involves the "degradation" of civilian culture at the start of the training at the police academy.

While police organizations are now better emphasizing member wellness and promoting more inclusive police services as part of a modern organizational workplace ethos, a "strong, professional norm" is still conveyed to officers at every level of policing through the academy training and subsequent in-service training, where traditional crime-fighting skills are still promoted over skills that encourage change and development of the profession[43].

Identity in Canadian Policing: Why it Matters

Police professionals navigate competing concepts about what it means to be a police officer, giving rise to a unique police identity crisis[44]. A crisis in how police officers see themselves has direct and significant consequences for how police leaders can develop and maintain inclusive and diverse organizations that meet contemporary and changing public demands for policing services. It is important to ensure police members reflect the diversity of the communities they serve and ensure that all police members (sworn and civilians) work in healthy, dynamic workplaces that emphasize professional respect and wellness.

Canadian police leaders are on the frontlines of balancing the many competing needs of policing today. As the voice of senior police leaders in Canada, the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police (CACP) has acknowledged its responsibility in leading change in Canadian law enforcement as part of its strategic priorities[45]. This White Paper is designed to address the need for change by critically examining the issue of police officers' identity construction and maintenance and its role in the dynamics of Canadian policing.

In many ways, how police officers construct (and will continue to construct) their identities as law enforcement professionals will shape the future of policing in this country. There is a crisis in identity construction when it comes to today's police officers[46][47]. Officers feel the pull of a deeply rooted police culture with a traditional (conservative) mindset that demands they adhere to traditional occupational norms and values. Meanwhile, the profession claims to strive toward a service mindset based on community policing and collaborative values[48][49]. Naturally, this places significant stress on officers' personal and professional values, identity, and sense of professional self.

This study critically examines the factors that drive identity construction at the recruitment level and during the ongoing socialization of police officers at both an organizational and personal levels.

Pain Points: Policing Culture and Challenges in Contemporary Policing

When it comes to organizational change, "pain points" are defined as "specific problems faced by current or prospective customers in the marketplace" and may include problems the customer may experience along their journey in dealing with a business[50]. As leaders of organizations that deliver specific public services (namely, public safety), police leaders face unique pain points in attempting to meet public expectations in the delivery of law enforcement services while also attempting to justify the significant public investments required to run highly complex and labour-intensive police organizations[51][52][53]. For police associations such as the CACP, which represents senior police leaders in Canada, pain points inevitably lead to a crisis if Canadians lose public trust and confidence in those entrusted with keeping their communities safe. In fact, the CACP has listed public trust and confidence as one of its strategic priorities in its current strategic plan[54]. Jackson and Bradford[55] argued that the reasons for this emphasis on trust and confidence issues by police is that it hits on many pain points in the journey which bind police services and the public together. Strong public trust and confidence in policing:

- Encourages active citizen participation in setting policing priorities.

- Makes policing services more locally accountable and responsive, and

- Secures greater public cooperation with police and compliance with the law.

However, police culture and its continuing strong hold on how police officers construct their identity as being the "face" of policing can present significant challenges to achieving positive change within the profession. Culture is conveyed to members of police organizations by how police members communicate[56][57][58]. The language used in the unique police workplace and police training academies – workplace jargon, narratives or war stories used to convey values and meaning for police officers (which they are expected to not just adhere to, but ingrain in their own professional values and beliefs

as police officers), the symbols that convey meaning for police officers – all are based on the traditional values which ground the unique police culture and build that culture. Based on their occupational culture, police officers can choose to construct that culture based on the traditional values of policing – typically defined as *hypermasculine* [59 60 61 62 63 63 64] – or shift the cultural values and convey new meanings through the new narratives which express what it is to be a police officer today.

The continued attachment to the deeply embedded police culture has come under increasing social pressures in the last few decades in an effort to make police organizations more representative of the communities they serve[65 66]. There are several significant barriers to promoting diversity and inclusion as principles of police organizations and shifting the identity-building of Canadian police officers to reflect these principles. First, policing is about power and the exercising of coercive power. This power is derived not just from state authorities through laws and regulations, but the fact that law enforcement organizations remain rooted in a police culture that traditionally has been subjective in nature, based on unique discourses that construct the police officer as heterosexual and hypermasculine in character[67 68 69 70], and produce organizations traditionally characterized as having an "impervious, white, heterosexist, male culture"[71].

The culture remains stubbornly resistant to change, resulting in structural or surface changes (e.g., policy changes) in key organizational areas such as recruitment, training, equity, diversity, and inclusivity[72 73 74 75]. This culture continues to be dominated by people who identify as white males – in the United States, 75 percent of police nationally are white[76] and 12.6 percent are female[77,] while in Canada, only eight percent of police officers identify as visible minority and 22 percent as female[78 79]. This speaks to the persistence of the traditional characteristics of the police culture despite the fact, for example, that while people who identify as women have been active participants in the policing profession for more than a century now, there is no evidence of a fully integrated police organization

where females represent 50% of the officer workforce and ranks[80]. These facts represent significant challenges for the CACP if it is to play a leading role in shaping a more inclusive policing profession in Canada that actually reflects the diverse communities that make up this nation.

Culture Change and the CACP

The CACP was founded on September 6, 1905, as the "Chief Constables Association of Canada". It adopted its current name in the early 1950s. As a national association, its stated mandate was to be an association "dedicated to the support and promotion of efficient law enforcement and to the protection and security of the people of Canada"[81]. In 2013, the CACP updated its mandate to place a new emphasis on "Supporting police professionals through innovative and inclusive police leadership to advance the safety and security of all Canadians"[82].

By its stated mandates, the CACP signals its values as being traditional "law-and-order" oriented and supportive of police leadership. This is in line with the nature of policing itself, where change is incremental rather than revolutionary, and policing orientation is built on the enforcement of the state's laws and the general welfare of the state's citizens[83][84][85]. As the collective voice of Canadian police leaders, the CACP has made strides to confront the challenges facing a profession with deep roots in policing culture. In 2018, the CACP produced a study on the "structural" inclusion within modern police services in Canada. The CACP found that, while police organizations claim to adhere to the principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion in their policies, procedures, recruitment, and training practices, "authentic inclusion" where tangible and systemic organizational and cultural changes take place is not the reality[86]. In fact, the CACP identified four types of potential police workplace cultures:

1. Predatory (intentionally exclusionary structures and culture)

2. Exclusionary (systemic, structural, and cultural barriers to inclusion)

3. Structurally Inclusive (programs and policies that aim to achieve "diversity targets")

4. Authentically Inclusive (genuine, widespread, and on-going efforts to embed inclusion, respect, and unrestricted deployment of talents) (p. 9).

This CACP study found that while the first three types of workplaces have and continue to exist within Canadian policing, and police members can take pride in the fact that most organizations were deemed to fall within the Structurally Inclusive workplace, an "authentically inclusive" workplace did not exist in Canada.

In its current Strategic Plan, the CACP recognizes some issues related to police organizations and their relationships with communities, specifically "Policing with Indigenous Peoples" and "Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion." While the priorities of senior police leadership in Canada continue to focus on "law and order" issues such as "Drugs", "Electronic Crime", "Guns, Gangs, and Organized Crime", "Road Safety", "Innovation/Future of Policing" the association is striving to expand its focus to "Employee wellness and police interactions with people in crisis" and "Public perception, confidence, and trust in policing"[87].

Police Work and Power in Police Organizations

Police services in Western societies are structured based on hierarchy and rank and are expected to deliver crime control, public order maintenance, and assistance to the public[88]. Power relationships within the police organization and in relation to policing as an instrument of state power play an important role in the daily working lives of police officers and influence their experiences as police professionals[89][90][91]. Police organizations, structures, policies, training, etc., communicate (through workplace language used in police work, policies, and procedures, etc.) the policing values and norms officers are expected to reflect in their work. These norms and values regulate the conduct and identity of police officers, which have traditionally reflected the heterosexual and hypermasculine character of policing in the Western world[92][93][94]. The power role of police officers as law enforcers and police culture inevitably raise questions about the role of policing in society and the nature of contemporary policing[95][96].

Highly publicized incidents of police brutality and discrimination in Canada and globally raise public and political concerns about police conduct and accountability. They bring into question the public's trust in police organizations and the legitimacy of policing as a public institution. This has led academic researchers, police critics, and advocacy groups to question the unique language of policing, especially what Correia and Wall[97] call "copspeak", which presents policing as inevitable and indispensable. Copspeak is a speech-style defined by jargon used within the police setting that is often unrecognizable to individuals outside of policing and utilizes over-elaboration, particularly in legal settings (e.g., the courtroom) or in media reports as a way to assert police authority and expertise that supports the traditional police culture. An example of this occurs when police are positioned as neutral "experts" by media and referred to as "officials" or "sources" in media stories, which may encourage

police officers to resist criticism of their work and conduct and further drive a gap between police officers and the public[98].
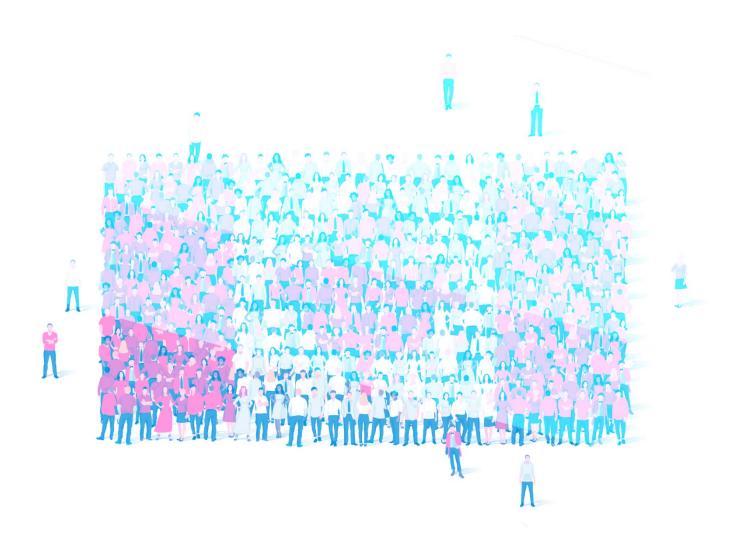
Copspeak is closely tied to the police culture and socializes officers to distance themselves from the public (since the public cannot possibly understand the complexities of policing). It reinforces the identity of officers as "set apart" from the rest of society while also seeking to insulate police from criticism by promoting police as "specialists" whose actions are those of experts who must be trusted and accepted for the greater public safety good. This is problematic because it runs counter to efforts to better connect police officers to their communities through such strategies as community policing and prevent the police culture's traditional isolation of police officers from the public[99][100].

Police-specific jargon is taken up in the courtroom and promoted in the media by their regular and accepted use of well-known "policing" terms. Thus, a police officer is involved in an "officer-involved shooting" rather than shooting a person; suspects have "altercations" with police and are objectified as "suspects" or "subjects"; communities are "high-crime areas" to be approached with caution by police officers and the public-at-large[101][102].

This type of language enforces power in police communication with its members (especially police officers), as well as with government, other justice participants (e.g., the courts), and the media. It is language designed to be what Correia and Wall[103] (2018) define as, "carefully calibrated to limit our ability to understand police as anything other than an equitable force and indispensable institution" and a "justification machine" (p. 7). The result is that the language and the reality portrayed by this specific use of language renders positive changes to police culture difficult, if not impossible.

This study posits that change in policing requires bringing about change to police *organizations*, beginning with an examination of power relations that drive police officers' identity construction first at the recruitment level, then the ongoing socialization of police officers at both an organizational and

personal level. Further, broad social changes and organizational changes (within law enforcement organizations) imply that individuals and communities either adjust or reject social or organizational customs, assumptions, values, etc. and adopt or initiate different ways to think and act. Such change is driven by many different factors, including culture, demographics, economics, environment, politics, religious beliefs, scientific and technological innovations, etc.[104.]

The Study

For this study, 30 qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted with police officers in four Canadian police services differing in organizational size/type and geographic location. The four services consisted of a mid-sized service in Western Canada, a mid-sized service in central Canada, a large, urban, regional service in central Canada, and a mid-sized service in Atlantic Canada. In choosing these four services, a number of factors were considered.

Canada's police system is unique among peer (Western) countries both in its complexity and geographic asymmetry[105]. Three levels of government (local, provincial, and federal) are involved in policing, leading to significant differences in the type of policing services that citizens receive depending on where they live (e.g., policing by a national, provincial, municipal, or Indigenous police service). The result is that a majority of Canadians (56%) are policed by stand-alone municipal and Indigenous police services, with another 20% of officers employed by the RCMP providing contract municipal policing and officers with provincial police services (Ontario Provincial Police, La Sûreté du Québec, and the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary) accounting for another 9% combined total[106]. In this case, four municipal police services were chosen. Officers in these services work in similar organizations, in contrast to RCMP officers who police in a national organization with its own unique subculture, history, and organizational challenges.

The study attempted to account for geographical variations among the four services that reflect Canada's expansive and continental realities and was limited to English-speaking participants due to the primary researcher's lack of fluency in French. Interviews focused on officers' experiences in law enforcement and how the unique language of policing – verbal, written, or visual in form – shapes their identities. Participants in this study volunteered after receiving an email invitation from their Chief of Police's office.

The majority of participants (18) had been police officers for 20 years or less, with a further 10 being on the job for up to 30 years. Two (2) participants had 30-plus years of experience as police officer (see Addendum). Most participants (28) indicated that they spent all of their policing career with their current service, with one participant transferring from a provincial police service to a municipal police service and one from a municipal police service to another municipal police service.

Participants and Interviews

One-on-one interviews were conducted with participating police officers between January and June 2021 via a secure Zoom videoconferencing platform. Participation in the research was completely anonymous and voluntary. Interviews were based on open-ended, semi-structured questions and generally took approximately 45 to 90 minutes per interview.

Results – Part I: Identity-Building Before Starting a Policing Career

In order to determine how participants developed and shaped their sense of identity prior to becoming police officers, they were asked four specific questions:

- What words come to mind when you think of the words 'police officer'?

- Thinking about the time before you began your policing career, what were your general perceptions of policing and police officers?

- Thinking about the time before you entered policing, who or what influenced you to become a police officer? How did they influence you?

- Thinking about your recruitment into policing, what (or who) attracted you to becoming a police officer? How did they influence you?

Personal influences or exposures to policing generally served to socialize participants into seeing themselves in the profession. In some cases, it reinforced a latent desire to "become a cop" from childhood or early adulthood. In other cases, the attraction was to "the job" itself (the variety of the work, the skills perceived to be needed to be a police officer, the paramilitary structure of policing – particularly those with a military background – and the good salary, benefits, and pension for police officers in Canada). Perceptions of the police culture derived either from personal experiences or observations of officers or their work (e.g., family members in the profession, an officer who acted as a mentor, observing officers in their roles, etc.) had a significant impact in drawing participants to the profession. Subsequent recruitment and training as part of career development tended to reinforce what it meant to be a police officer.

An analysis of responses to preconceptions of policing revealed three distinct concepts:

- Policing as a Calling/Public Service

- Policing as the "Job"/Traditional Policing

- Influence of Family/Friends/Officers

Policing as a Calling/Public Service

Four distinct themes emerged when participants recalled their pre-policing concept of police officers:

1. Police officers as servants (guardian, protector, altruism, community)

2. Policing as a profession that is positive (ethical, professional)

3. Police officers as law enforcers (warrior)

4. Policing as a profession that is negative (separate from society; frontline-management conflict; public scrutiny)

Further, these themes can be summarized in three ways:

1. Policing as a calling/public service ⟶ officer sees role as "positive", "altruistic" and often "idealized" *(Contemporary view of police officer as a guardian/positive preconception of police officers)*

2. Policing as "the job" ⟶ officer sees their role as "the job" *(Neutral view of police officer – no defined view or policing as a "job")*

3. Policing as traditional policing ⟶ officer sees their role as "enforcement" (us vs. them; *traditional view of police officer as a law enforcer/warrior).*

Participants who recalled their perception of policing and police officers before they entered the profession in a positive or altruistic light used such terms as "guardians", "protector", "servant",

"altruism", "ethical or professional" to describe police officers. For them, police officers were powerful yet benevolent figures who worked to keep people safe:

> *"My perception of police was that we could fix problems; you could call us and we're gonna come and everything's going to be great." (Participant 2)*

> *"More so than the average person, I figured they made very few mistakes, if any, that they were always motivated and focused on helping people, that they all took physical fitness seriously, and that they were just all extremely brave. And kind of community minded." (Participant 13)*

Yet, it's important to note that generally, those who had a positive view of policing and police officers at this stage of their development as police officers did not embrace a "soft-on-crime" approach to policing. For example, none of the participants in this category suggested that police officers should not exercise force as part of their duties when investigating crimes and arresting perpetrators of criminal acts. Rather, they suggested that officers who displayed altruistic approaches to policing based on community engagement were "ethical" and "professional" in their work (in contrast to traditional "get-tough-on-crime" approaches). Fundamentally, this indicates clear support for policing as an instrument of power through enforcing laws where even positive terms such as "guardians" or "protectors" retain a sense of power over others.

Participants who indicated an altruistic ethos for becoming police officers did not indicate that they supported the fundamental challenge of the power dynamics of police work, police's paramilitary structure, etc., but rather approaches to it (e.g., collaboration with the community rather than get-tough-on-crime approaches). This suggests that there remains a continued strong hold of traditional, institutional police structures and culture over officers and their work.

On the other hand, some participants who indicated that their preconception of police officers was negative suggested that officers were feared and to be avoided as they grew up; officers were "power tripping" and sometimes corrupt, yet idealized as "brave" and to be respected:

"…police officers were brave, fair, impartial, and wholesome." (Participant 25)

"Community role model would probably also be another good one that I would throw out; that would be an assumption going in knowing that if I had gotten hired or when I got hired one day." (Participant 19)

"My dad was a police officer. So, I always had high regard and respect for police officers. I looked up to police officers, especially as a kid; my dad was one. I thought they were heroes." (Participant 21)

Participants indicated that these attitudes prior to joining the police profession were carried into the job and influenced officers' attitudes as to what their jobs entailed (e.g., law enforcers versus community service-oriented) and their professional identities in doing their work. Such preconceived attitudes generally fit within a traditional narrative in policing where officers are taught to be suspicious of the public[107][108].

Policing as the "Job"/Traditional Policing

Participants who saw policing and police officers in a less altruistic manner generally used terms such as "law enforcer" (which is usually equated with a warrior mentality associated with traditional policing) or policing as simply "the job" (rather than a public service) to demonstrate their views prior to joining the profession. These participants stressed the importance of "law enforcement" and

generally saw police officers as separate from the rest of the community and whose first responsibility was the enforcement of laws:

> *"Before I became a police officer, I thought it was a lot more like law enforcement and a lot more kind of like investigating things, arresting 'bad guys', you know, like to put it in a cartoonish way. You know, traffic tickets, things like that, just kind of maintaining the status quo, making sure everyone's generally abiding by the law." (Participant 8)*

Some participants indicated a neutral view of policing as "the job" – one that paid well, offered a variety of work, good benefits, etc. These participants clearly viewed their profession as providing a well-paying job that appealed to their need for economic well-being:

> *"And then, you know, these things factored in for me: you only needed a grade 12 to get hired. Quickly climb the pay scale, within four years, you're near the top of your pay scale, benefits, pension, those things all factored in, and then you know, the freedom of knowing that you just get to leave the station and drive around, and you're not really tied to what felt like one job." (Participant 9)*

> *"I'm gonna be honest on this one. I'm not gonna say I wanted to be a police officer to make things better. I was working in a youth detention [centre]. I was a counselor, and that doesn't pay the bills very well. And it was after the Rae Days [12 days of mandatory unpaid leave for all Ontario government workers introduced in 1993], the freeze was lifted, and policing had a good income. You started off like double the salary."*
> *(Participant 11)*

Those who held this view generally indicated a preference for traditional law enforcement approaches to policing rather than more collaborative, community-focused approaches. This can

perpetuate acceptance of the hierarchal power structures found within police organizations (starting with Coach Officers and continuing with adhering to the rules and regulations enforced by officers' supervisors and mentors) and encourage resistance to significant changes in the profession.

Influence of Family/Friends/Officers

As the table below illustrates, police officers come into their profession having been strongly influenced by close, personal contacts (family and/or friends) as well as an attitude that policing should make a difference in society:

Impact (mentions)
Friend (5) Friend in police (1) Family (9)
Desire to be a police officer/Make society better (8) Desire to change policing (1)
Police officer(s) (5) Cadet/Reserve program (2)
Policing skill set (1) Variety of the job (5) Profession similar to military (2) Pay/benefits/pension (3)
Television (2)

How people are socialized to think about policing by family/friends or external influencers can make a significant difference in terms of how future officers build their professional identities and attitudes, their sense of what their professional selves entail, as well as how they use their power to impact individuals' people they deal with. Many participants indicated they already had someone close to them in the profession when they considered or started their own careers. Such individuals tended to have strong views about who or what police officers were.

"My dad was 30-year cop. My stepmom was a cop, my uncles, stuff like that."
(Participant 9)

"…grew up in a police family, my dad was a police officer. And I was a daddy's girl. So, it made a lot of sense to (go into policing). I'd never wanted to do anything else or be anything else. And so, it's very simple. Like, since I was about four or five years old, I've always wanted to follow in my father's footsteps. And so, I've always known what I was going to do." (Participant 12)

Similarly, friends who either wanted to enter the profession or were themselves officers influenced participants' views and choices as law enforcers:

"I had some friends that I knew from the local gym where we all trained. So, for me, it would have been either policing or military." (Participant 28)

Serving police officers also have a significant impact on the new recruit:

"I was playing [on a] men's (hockey) league team with police officers. I graduated electrical engineering from college, and 10 different jobs lined up. And it was a different hiring process. And these cops, they said, 'You should become a cop'. I'm like, 'I never really thought about being a cop'. 'You should do it'. And I literally got hired within a month." (Participant 4)

"My sister and her boyfriend were going to university at the same time [as me]. And his brother was an officer. And he's like, 'Why don't you just be a cop?' And I'm like, 'I don't think that's for me.' And he's like, 'I think it is, knowing your brother and the type of person you are. Why don't you look it up?'" (Participant 25)
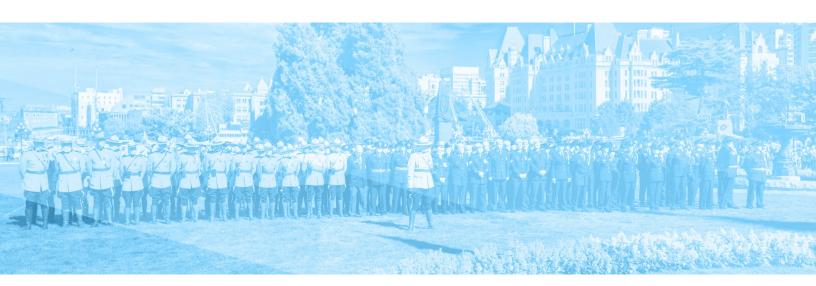
Such personal influencers engage in the transfer of personal, experienced knowledge and are highly likely to pass on their personal knowledge, attitudes, values, and viewpoints of what the "job" is like, expectations of the job, attitudes toward superior officers, governing authorities, the media, etc.

The relationships involving personal influence or exposure to police officers and policing prior to recruitment serve to socialize participants into seeing themselves in the role of the police officer. In many cases, it reinforced a latent desire to "become a cop" from childhood or early adulthood. In other cases, the attraction was to "the job" itself (e.g., the variety of the work, the skills perceived to be a good officer, and the paramilitary structure of policing – particularly those with a military background). Participants also cited the generally good salaries, benefits, and pensions available to police officers in Canada. In all these cases, police officers are seen as distinct from the community and powerful figures (to enforce laws, do good, etc.).

Some participants did indicate that the idea of "making a difference" – something police recruits routinely mention in recruitment interviews – had an impact on their career choice. However, while this may indicate that policing as a profession has at its core the concept of public service as part of its ethos, most participants indicated that the choice to become a police officer was primarily a very personal choice and directed at achieving personal goals (joining the family business, achieving monetary goals, wanting to realize a childhood goal, etc.), at least prior to the joining of the profession.

Studies on the influence of parents and close friends on the attitudes of police recruits[109][110][111][112] indicate what many participants suggested in this study: that personal influencer such as family members and friends play an important role (either positively or negatively) in the potential police recruit's attitudes to policing prior to officers being hired by their police organizations. This suggests that police organizations should place greater emphasis on outreach and interaction with not just potential recruits, but also their families, schools, and other early influencers.

The data showed that while participants might differ in how they viewed policing as either a public service or as a job prior to their joining the profession, they brought with them definite ideas and expectations of what a police career generally entails. Participants generally accepted the basic structures and mission of police organizations and the norms that undergird the unique police culture. They also consistently reported on the significant power of personal influencers in shaping their outlook about policing. These influencers play a key role in socializing recruits into policing and preparing them for a general acceptance of the unique police culture, structure, organization, etc.

Results– Part II: Thinking About Being a Police Officer

For the next level of analysis, this study considered how participants identified and thought of themselves as police officers. Three questions were asked of participants that were aimed at understanding how the training and education officers receive impact their sense of identity:

- "Thinking about your initial training, what things do you remember most about it? What things that you learned in your initial training do you think most influenced you as a police officer?"

- "Thinking about the materials used during your initial training such as textbooks, presentations, and other training materials, how do you think they shaped your understanding of what it means to be a police officer?"

- "What police training and educational programs have you taken over the years?"

In describing their initial training experiences, participants identified three main themes:

1. Learning about "the job"

2. Positive and/or negative aspects of the training itself

3. The pride and professionalism conveyed about being a police officer as well as the socialization that occurs into a unique police culture during training.

The Job

Participants all described having to learn about the "realities" of the work of a police officer, commonly referred to as "the job". During this early phase of an officer's career, the emphasis is on distancing the recruit away from their previous life and into the policing "family". Themes such as the dangers of the job (including the need for officers to understand the constant need to "watch your back" and having their peers' backs), the "realities" of police work that the rest of the world cannot

understand or appreciate, and the sense that you must "survive" the job emerged as common ones among interviews:

"The things that I still reflect on would be more of the officer safety components. The emphasis on complacency being one of the main, if I may use the term, 'police killer'. It's one thing to learn the theoretical components of policing, and then the application of those theoretical components is completely different." **(Participant 1)**

"The biggest one I remember from the academy was one of my instructors like day two or three, said, 'So, it's always like you go there, the report sometimes it comes in really big, like, 'Oh my God! Shots fired!', blood everywhere, and you show up. And none of that is true. Or on the flip side, where it's a very minor call, and you go inside, you're like, holy smokes, this is a crime scene. So, that always stood out for me." **(Participant 22)**

"…you do meet like-minded people that are good people and you become friends with even in that short period of time. And you have that commonality. And because the emphasis is on the fact that you are in a very small group of people that are sometimes targeted by other groups of people. We have to look out for one another in that sense. So, you do meet these people and you get out there and you just want to go into your communities and do that job that you've been trained for the last three months, four months." **(Participant 10)**

During their initial and subsequent police training, officers are expected to learn how to be a police officer by embracing the unique professional norms and values which officers are expected to

adhere to. During this time, professional training and workplace interactions effectively establish what the police officer's identity should be, where fundamental values and principles about being a police officer are taught and reinforced in new recruits. It is a time when officers acquire a sense of the unique power conferred on police officers – that they have power and that they wield it over their fellow citizens – through enforcement of state laws and the discretion on the application of these laws. As we see in the next section, the planning and delivery of the initial training set the foundation for an officer's sense of identity as well as their power position vis-à-vis their fellow citizens.

The Training

The reality of the job for participants learned through their initial and subsequent training emphasized discipline and the paramilitary structure of policing. According to Chappel and Lanza-Laduce[113], paramilitary organizations like police services desire new members to willingly submit to the "intense rules and authority structure", which are the hallmarks of such organizations (p. 190). In fact, research has shown that police academies stress, "strict discipline, deportment, following orders, and a stress-based style of instruction"[114] (p. 15) and that recruits unwilling to adhere to the rules and expectations of paramilitary organizations are unlikely to succeed[115][116].

Power relations in policing and other paramilitary organizations are hierarchal, with an emphasis on not questioning instructors or Coach Officers and superiors in the field. This led some participants (as recruits) to complain about "information overload" designed to keep them stressed as a means of discipline and instructors treating recruits as "children". This emphasizes and engrains the power relationships between senior/supervisory officers and their subordinates from the earliest part of a police officer's career in law enforcement:

> *"I felt like, especially in the beginning, not only in the beginning, but I mean, a lot in the*
>
> *beginning, where there was that pressure to forget about what you have learned or what*

you have known; the only right thing is what we tell you to do. And you have to kind of

fall into that or otherwise, you know, there might be consequences. So, I remember

feeling like that in the beginning. I also remember feeling like, again, being 27 [years-

of-age], I wasn't very young at that point. I felt like we were treated like children versus

adults. And which is kind of funny because, like I said, my perception of a police officer

was somebody that's mature. And then getting in there and… you're being treated like a

child." **(Participant 20)**

In such relationships, emphasizing doing everything "by the book" discourages the questioning of orders by subordinate officers and ensures the adherence to rules and regulations, further emphasizing the officer's role of enforcer of laws and rules on the job. Not only are power relations reinforced in this way, but so are the power dynamics and structures of the traditional police workplace:

"You know, it can always improve, but the base foundation of law enforcement, that part

of policing is based on statute. Everything's statute, everything's [by the] book. So, I get

it, why that was there. That was really, really good. I say good because it was mandatory.

And it was difficult. You couldn't bullshit your way through exams and things like that,

either. You studied it and knew it." **(Participant 6)**

As participants progressed through their careers, they cited two distinct tracks related to their formal training once they were established in their law enforcement careers. The first track was "police speciality" training, which is traditionally and actively promoted by police organizations as the key to career advancement. The second was a more recent phenomenon: training on emerging issues beyond traditional law enforcement designed to make officers "specialists" in non-traditional policing areas.

Speciality training was seen by participants as the means to climb the organizational ladder, that is, advancing beyond the frontline patrol officer to specialized units such as homicide, intelligence, public order units, canine units, and leadership positions that offer promotional opportunities and diversity in terms of job functions. This type of training was particularly seen as advantageous to self-promotion and advancement and supportive of the police power structure, hierarchy, and command structure. Importantly, this training encourages officers to support the police system for tangible professional rewards (e.g., promotions):

"Training provides you the tools with how to deal with experiences. But it's really those experiences that really kind of set you how you understand where you're going with this [in your career advancement]." **(Participant 6)**

"I'm sitting here as a senior officer, so it definitely opened the door to opportunity. The development opened the door to advancement. Has it shaped me for who I am, as a police officer? I believe it may have, but I think I had those characteristics before I got the job like. I take my training seriously, I'm engaged in it, I participate in it, I try to get others involved because I understand the importance behind it." **(Participant 11)**

On the other hand, training on contemporary legal and social issues such as Charter rights, diversity, mental health, leadership/management, human trafficking, etc., is increasingly seen as not only advantageous in handling emerging social pressures in the community, but also as a means to becoming a "specialist" and as a means to career advancement:

"The other things that I really enjoy more now are when we take things [like] Charter rights issues. I wouldn't call myself a geek, but I like reading case law and, you know, seeing if I do this, what will result from it, you know, 10 years down the road when they

look at that case? So, I really like looking at Charter issues, not saying I agree with the entire Charter. But I find it very interesting." **(Participant 2)**

"One thing that really sticks out to me…was 'fair and impartial policing training' we had a few years ago. I think we turned a corner as an organization when we have that training for all sworn and civilian members: how do we treat one another? How do we treat members of the public? It's this new reality that we deal with it. No, people aren't going to just respond because we show up in uniform; people aren't going to do what we say just because we're in this shirt. We have to treat people with a degree of expected dignity and respect in order to get them to interact with us. And that's what that fair and impartial piece was. So, that really changed my perspective. But I think it changed the perspective of a lot of people in this profession." **(Participant 15)**

While both types of training have career advancement in common, officers who sought traditional speciality training generally signalled that they were inclined to see themselves as more "traditional" police "professionals" (or even as "warriors"), and the training did nothing to change their sense of self as police officers:

"…those courses are supposed to change my sense of identity as a police officer, and they're not doing, they're not working…I would say that your sense of identity isn't just something that exists in isolation, right? It needs, there's a social element of it, right? And you don't get that social element from these online courses that they're jamming down our throats." **(Participant 26)**

On the other hand, those who leaned toward more non-traditional areas of training were more inclined to see themselves as "guardians". As the participant below indicates, officers' perspective of why they do the job can shift from traditional law enforcement to policing as a public "social" service:

"So, my initial coming in was 'Let's go change the world. Let's clean up the streets.'
Now, for me, I feel like it's more of 'Let's serve', including serving those people who
initially I felt like I need to clean off the streets. **(Participant 1)**

Participants (both experienced officers and those new to the profession) indicated that police training continues to reinforce traditional, hierarchal organizational norms that emphasize adherence to discipline, following rules, and submission to authority, no matter how altruistic the training's intentions are in promoting things like diversity and inclusion. The training for recruits emphasizes not questioning instructors or Coach Officers in the field. Subsequent in-service training continues to adhere to traditional concepts of hierarchy and submission to authority. However, in terms of contemporary policing, this may be undermined when both experienced officers and police recruits question training methods that are seen as lacking creativity or not utilizing modern training methods as seen, for example, in post-secondary training environments[117].

Police officers today are under tremendous occupational pressures[118][119]. According to Ting et al.[120], police work is unique in that it combines numerous high stress factors as part of the daily job of a police officer: challenging tasks, high risk, and often unexpected events (p. 2). As societal demands on public service organizations change, police officers must cope with the changing mental and professional demands placed on them.

Participants expressed an expectation that just as the demands on policing change, so must the training methods. For example, as Charter and diversity issues become more important in how officers interpret their interactions with individuals and use their discretion on the job, there is an expectation

that training will evolve both at the academy and in-service in order to equip officers to meet the changing needs of law enforcement (Participants 2, 15). Traditional training methods that emphasize top-down knowledge transfer do not allow for questioning of superiors and focus on crime control and "by-the-book" policing. These may cause frustration for new recruits, and officers debating social issues (e.g., mental health, diversity, and community relations, etc.) and engaging in social media, which encourages the sharing of personal opinions unfiltered by authorities or organization.

Regardless of these facts, police training remains embedded in power relationships that demand following the rules laid out for police officers from the start of their policing career through subsequent training and promotional opportunities, leaving little room for questioning how "the job" is carried out. Participants noted that "specialty training" (with its emphasis on traditional crime fighting) remains the main path to career advancement and power within hierarchical police organizations, rather than "soft" policing such as community policing, despite community pressures for officers to be more than just crime fighters.

Professionalism/Socialization

During the early training phase of participants' policing careers, many reported having a strong sense of pride in the uniform, and their chosen profession purposefully instilled into their consciousness during both formal training and informal interaction with supervisors, mentors, and peers. This indicates that police organizations employ an intentional process of socialization to which officers are subjected to when they join a paramilitary organization such as policing[121][122]. Recruit training exposes recruits to new peers going through the same learning processes, and many report that life-long friendships emerge from a common experience. Camaraderie – one which emphasizes a common purpose and separateness from the rest of society – begins the on-going socialization of recruits into a police "brotherhood", as these participants noted:

"…It's fun. You meet a lot of unique people that you're kind of surprised are going into the profession, but you do meet like-minded people that are good people and you become friends with even in that short period of time. And you have that commonality. And because the emphasis is on the fact that you are in a very small group of people that are sometimes targeted by other groups of people. And we have to look out for one another."
(Participant 10)

"The camaraderie. I caught that not only because we were told that it's a closely knit profession. We support one another, we were a team, we have to be there for each other, for our, you know, risk for our safety and the safety of the community. But it was demonstrated by everybody in my class." **(Participant 15)**

"We had one of our instructors, and he used the phrase, 'Be 100% professional 100% of the time'. I think just remaining and being professional at all times is what really stuck out to us especially now. You're always under watch, you're always under scrutiny."
(Participant 16)

This socialization instills a set of values that is strongly centered around the dangers of the "job" and the need to have each other's backs. The strong paramilitary discipline engrained in policing is designed to promote a distinct police culture where rules are followed, superiors are unquestioned, and there is unwavering loyalty to other officers. It also reinforces the sense of a "brotherhood", or the "blue identity" held by police officers, which includes a "noticeable identification with the [police] organisation as a whole"[123] and suspicion of anyone outside the profession. This blue identity can be exclusionary in nature, resulting in a division between police members and the rest of society,

antagonism toward those outside policing through worker-group solidarity, and fostering a sense of social isolation among police officers[124][125].

Further, the uniform and the fraternity of policing provide members with a sense of power. This power is crucial to the "survival" of officers who must deal with the stresses of the job (both in doing their dangerous police work and in terms of the stresses the job places on their personal relationships):

> *"But what I also really appreciated was, we had a couple instructors who really made an effort to like, talk about balancing work and kind of the survive[sic], like survivability and longevity of being a police officer. So, talking about things like the hyper-vigilance cycle coming off nights."* **(Participant 22)**

The passing down of policing values relied on the materials and instructors/mentors utilized to transfer knowledge in terms of what it means to be a police professional. In particular, participants cited the significant impact of strong mentors (instructors, Coach Officers) and their stories about "the job" and/or scenario-based training in conveying traditional and conservative law enforcement values and ethics.

> *"When it comes to influence, I think it was more of the interactions, the mentoring type interactions with instructors. And that is why I think personally, I do reflect very positively on my… career. And I know some others who reflect negatively on it, my thoughts are that the people who reflected more negatively on it did not necessarily have the connection, the mentorship-type connection with instructors. It was more of a sit down, learn, and go home. Hence the increased frustration as opposed to I would suggest, myself, whether it be my approach to it or the positive influence of the actual instructors. Maybe I just got lucky."* **(Participant 1)**

"I think it [the police academy] gives you a bit of like a fundamental basis of how to do the job. But I think you really receive your coaching or your training, when you get back to your police service, because they really, all the points that [the academy] highlights that they think is important, really get emphasized by your Coach Officer. So. that's why I think the importance is having a good, strong coach officer when you return to your service, because they really put all the pieces of the puzzle together for you."
(Participant 5)

"For me, it was more the post- [academy] training, while with your Coach Officer; this is the period to me that…started to begin to shape me as a police officer. And I would say that is probably still very true to this day. You know, I think your Coach Officer is a very big influence… I had an opportunity to train many officers, you know, while I was on the road, and I feel myself I was fortunate to have had a good, a very good training officer. But if you have someone who is going to develop bad habits, it would be during that time period." **(Participant 14)**

The "handing down" knowledge transfer was deemed to be of vital importance to participants in terms of enculturating them into the "job" as well as how to be a "professional" (through both formal training emphasizing enforcement of laws and informal mentorship from instructors, coach officers, and veteran officers). In fact, this knowledge transfer was so important to participants that some repeatedly expressed their frustration with outdated training materials, irrelevant materials to the "realities" of policing today (e.g., mental health challenges, dealing with Indigenous populations), and knowledge seen as not geared to the experiences that recruits bring into the job today (e.g., generally, more educated recruits).

It should be noted that no participants questioned the actual training and the values upon which that training is based – its emphasis on doing the "job", the lack of questioning of Coach Officers and other officers who hand down the knowledge, the adherence to rules and hierarchy at the core of policing power structures, etc. Rather, they indicated they wanted clear rules and expectations that would guide and protect them as police professionals expected to enforce the legal and social norms as defined in the state's laws.

Current police training practices continue to reinforce traditional occupational values and norms and what it means to be a police "professional", even as today's officers understand the need to incorporate knowledge of such issues such as mental health, community policing, human rights, and other contemporary issues into their work in order to effectively meet today's public safety expectations.

Results– Part III: The Police Officer in Their Police Organization

For the final level of analysis, this study focused on how participants perceived the language common to policing, how different police-related texts are made, disseminated, and read within their police services, and the impact on participant's identity construction. This includes how organizational practices, political realities, organizational values, and police socialization act to develop the values, assumptions, and beliefs of police officers. They also provide insights into how this works to perpetuate police culture and power structures. They influence communications within the unique police organizational culture and communicate organizational norms and expectations in a social context which perpetuates police cultural norms and rules of engagement and behaviour (Fairclough, 1989) and the power structures used to support them.

Participants were asked seven questions designed to probe this aspect of identity building:

- "As you look at your time as a recruit to where you are now in your policing career, how would you say you have changed? Think about the values, assumptions, and beliefs you started with and a recruit, then a young officer, and up to where you are now, what are those on-the-job experiences and learning opportunities you have had that have shaped you as a police officer?"

- "Who has impacted your values, beliefs, and assumptions?"

- Thinking about your organization, what words would you use to describe its values, assumptions, and beliefs?"

- "Do these values, assumptions, and beliefs reflect your own? If so, how? If not, why not?"

- "Do you believe that your organizational values have changed or evolved during your time in the organization?"

- "Based on what you perceive to be your organization's values, assumptions, and beliefs, what changes should your organization make to advance its core values, etc.? What areas should police leaders focus on?"

The following themes emerged from the data analysis in relation to values and identity construction:

- The Role of Personal Values

- Value Influencers

- The Role of Organizational Values

- The Role of Culture Change

- Management Issues and Impact on Identity

The Role of Personal Values

Personal values represent individuals' highest priorities. They are cognitive representations of our basic motivations, and work values influence what workers perceive to be important in their professional lives. In policing, high engagement and risk of burnout are often considered to be influenced by the values that officers bring with them to the profession.

When asked to consider their personal values, beliefs, and assumptions at the start of their policing career, compare them to where they are now, and how these have been subsequently shaped, most participants (26 out of 30) reported that their experiences in policing fell into two distinct and contrasting categories that often existed simultaneously:

1. Their policing experience had a <u>positive impact</u> on their professional identity (how officers saw their job as a police officer, how they interacted with colleagues and members of the public) and had a corresponding positive impact on their personal values and outlook on life, and/or

2. Their policing experience had a <u>negative impact</u> on their professional and (often) personal identity.

Four participants felt the job had no particular impact or couldn't identify how their values, beliefs, and assumptions may have been shaped or changed as their career progressed.

The positive and negative experiences of officers were, predictably, diametrically opposite. The positive impacts on officers' values were identified as follows:

Impact (mentions)
Compassion/help people (8)
Moving from distrust to giving people the benefit of the doubt (6)
Promote morals/values/integrity/accountability (5)
Lead by example (2)
From negative (attitude) to positive (2)
Value life more (1); More liberal (1); More decisive (1)

The negative impacts on officers' values were identified as follows:

Impact (mentions)
Bitter/angry/jaded (6)
General changes for the worse (4)
Did not care/Just a job (4)
Negative toward management (3)
Policing is political (2)
Put up a shield/barrier (2)
Negatively impacts personal life (2)
Hate people (1); Less patient (1); Less compassionate (1); See the world as black and white (1)

For most participants, the impact of their work as police officers was significant and resulted in strong reactions during the interviews, particularly negative reactions:

"As a person, I was becoming bitter and angry. As an officer, I never got complaints because I never went to a call and just treated people like, you know, bad because there's a professional side of you that takes over. But deep down inside, it was like, I don't want to be here. I don't care about your problems anymore. I just know, I was turning into not a good person inside." **(Participant 2)**

"When I first got on, I always thought, when you act in good faith and if you're a good person, nothing bad can happen to you. And then, you know, and some of the older guys, when you get on, they tell you, you know, you're not gonna feel (like) this… So, the fact that you can't even make a slip up, or if you're not liked, they will come after you. And it's a real awful feeling…It's just in that like walking on eggshells type mentality. So, it's tough to be out there doing the job." **(Participant 4)**

Participants who reported a negative impact were particularly passionate in expressing their feelings about their work lives. The nature of policing, whereby officers often have to deal with crimes and the consequences of crimes and interact with people engaging in unlawful acts, naturally causes significant stress for police officers. It feeds the cynicism that has traditionally been associated with those engaged in police work[127][128] and can result in an "us versus them" mentality when it comes to engaging with members of the public, media, or elected officials. As indicated in the following comments, police officers are sensitive to the negative impact of "the job" on them personally, particularly in how cynicism creeps into their work and outlook:

"Policing does this to you. You start off motivated and you just drastically underestimate what this profession will do to you psychologically, and through your relationships. And then it makes you kind of have a negative opinion about things. You think everybody's a bad guy, you think everybody's lying to you. You think no one else can understand you except other police officers." **(Participant 13)**

"It's a bit of a cycle with police officers. You do become jaded a little bit by the profession, you start to become more aggressive in your personality." **(Participant 14)**

"Personally, I think anybody that tells you they haven't changed, either is lying or they haven't taken the job probably as seriously as it needs to be. Not that long ago, I was going through a stint where I was noticing a change in myself. And you know, talking to a couple people about it, I kind of realized that the job had desensitized me quite a bit." **(Participant 19)**

Participants who expressed negative experiences also emphasized the conflict within police organizations, most notably between upper management and the frontline officers as well with elected officials who have oversight of policing or comment on the delivery of police services as part of their duties:

"For me now, my administration is very negative… and I think when you leave…the day-to-day policing aspect of it and you become a senior administrative staff where you basically are, you're tied to a desk and you do, you know, it is a political job, and I get it, that you're basically a politician wearing a police uniform. I think the other part is that from my perception, you lose sight of what the police service is, you lose sight of, you

know, what your members do for you, how to help them, the needs of your members, *those kinds of things."* **(Participant 5)**

"I find that this is a struggle within our management and specifically within _____ *police service as well as their leadership. They don't value a lot of my core values."* **(Participant 7)**

"You're starting to see a bit more of like the politics and stuff, you're getting *frustrated…like management, you know, who aren't on the road, and guys are on the* *road. So, I'm slowly seeing that kind of creep in."* **(Participant 22)**

Such perspectives place a strain on the inherent hierarchal, command-and-control power structure of policing on which so much of the police structure and profession is founded on. As noted previously, participants generally did not question the value of these power structures. Instead, they often express a sense of disappointment and even anger at the perceived lack of confidence in or questioning of police officers by the public. The perceived demands from elected officials, issues involving community trust (particularly from communities that traditionally felt oppressed by law enforcement because of their race, sexual orientation, gender, etc.), and negative media narratives about such issues as police use of force feeds into the traditional narrative among police officers that anyone not in policing simply cannot understand or appreciate what police officers go through as part of "the job".

Some participants noted the negative impact of police work on their personal lives, which resulted in officers putting up barriers between themselves and their loved ones or members of the

public, being less patient, etc. Participants very clearly blamed their experiences on the job for such feelings:

> *"There's the job. It's other things that happen in the job. But, you know, I mean, it carries over into my personal life too, as well, which I have to be cognizant of… I can't tell you when exactly it happened, but I can tell you after my XX-and-a-half years, I don't have the passion…and I come here and sometimes my patience isn't what it should be for my family."* **(Participant 10)**

> *"I'm a lot less trusting with people for the most part…you're always kind of on guard in the back of your mind of just various things."* **(Participant 24)**

> *"So, I think it naturally starts building up walls. When you're in your personal life, and you become a little suspicious, you don't always take people on their first word of what they say they're doing, and you become suspicious of people."* **(Participant 27)**

Clearly, participants – whether they reported positive or negative impacts on their professional and personal lives – felt passionate about their police training, professional experiences, and the police culture itself and its impact on their personal lives of participants. It is also clear that police officers' experiences are not monolithic. Participants who reported positive and negative experiences did so with often equal enthusiasm and generally shared a passion for policing. For example, the positive experiences indicated a movement from distrust toward compassion and helping people in their professional and personal lives, resulting in participants indicating that their personal values improved as a result of their police work.

Fundamentally, participants agreed with the value of officers being trained and socialized into a distinct police culture that emphasizes the distinct nature of police work. In doing so, they acknowledged the inherent challenges of the culture and the job, which often exposes officers to personal risk and abuse, criminality, situational uncertainty, and the threat of scrutiny by supervisors, the media, politicians, and the general public[129]. Participants did not argue with the fundamental role of police training guided by the police culture, which Conti[130] described as being geared toward transforming police recruits from civilians to the "organizational ideal" police officer.

The emphasis on the inherent dangers and risks of police work can cause officers to focus on and adapt to high stress working environments[131]. Adoption of the police hierarchy of rules, regulations, and following orders becomes a means to ensure the power structures of policing are generally accepted as the norm, with the narrative being that they are designed to "protect" the police officer from the job's dangers. On the other hand, transforming from a civilian to a police officer and accepting the policing norms does not prevent the fostering of negative impacts on officers' relationships with family members and loved ones, as well as the fostering of negative attitudes on the job, including cynicism and impatience with members of the public, etc.

Values Influencers

When asked what individuals had the greatest impact on their values, assumptions, and beliefs once they became police officers, Coach Officers (experienced police officers who mentor new officers as part of their initial training), and supervisors were most often identified as having the most influence interviews:

(Mentions)
Coach officers/supervisors/mentors (19)
No one (3)
Officers who "do the job differently") (2)
Investigators/officers in specialty units (2)
Family (not in policing) (2)
Community activists (1)
Fellow officers (peers) (1)
Recruits who inspire officers (1)
Family (in police) (1)
External people who help officers (1)

These people acted as teachers who either modelled how police work is done or inspired participants.

> *"I would say aside from my Coach Officer, my first Sergeant, who also at the time was one of the instructors of the _____ police college. When I went there...he guided me, he's the guy that sat me down and said, 'Hey, listen, if you want to do these things, this is what you need to do. If you want to get promoted, you want to make a difference. You want to lead people… this is the courses you need to do. These are the divisions you need to work in.' So, he was instrumental in getting me kind of focused on where I wanted to go."* **(Participant 5)**

The influence of the initial mentors for new recruits (academy instructors, Coach Officers) and subsequent supervisors within a highly regulated and hierarchical organization is crucial. Such officers are expected to train and mentor new recruits as well as experienced officers as they progress in their

careers in the expected ways of organizational behaviour. Moreover, participants indicated that they were not just influenced by the practical aspects of the job and the training they received to do the job, but by the significant socialization which takes place upon entering the profession and during their training and subsequent supervision. This acts to perpetuate the power relationships within the police workplace and the structures of power themselves (e.g., the rank structure, organizational hierarchy, etc.).

Recruits are particularly socialized into viewing policing as separated from the rest of society, even when officers themselves believe they are doing a social service on behalf of their fellow citizens. This is particularly important because negative influences on police recruits by Coach Officers and other supervisors could perpetuate negative policing practices such as harassment of members of the public, use of inappropriate force, etc.).

Influencers play a critical part not only in teaching the "how" of doing police work, but also act as conduits for transferring the "why" of police work. They also convey the fundamentals of police culture, particularly in relation to how officers are to act with their peers, management, and the public[132] [133].

Police Values: Themes

In this study, three main themes emerged with the "values" coding of the interviews:

1. Teaching (esp. Coach Officers, supervisors who mentored)
2. Modeling (how to do the job)
3. Inspiring (e.g., coaches, recruits, specialists)

Further, the general concepts which emerged from the data analysis were:

(1) the need to have models on the job

(2) inspiration for officers provided by internal actors such as Coach Officers, and

(3) some negative influencers who either caused officers to reject their influence or not be able to identify any individuals who inspired or significantly influenced their values construction.

While some participants clearly valued the influence of Coach Officers in particular, not all influencers were positive. Some participants reported that they were influenced by people whose opinions and actions actually caused them to develop their values in another direction:

"I've worked for a lot of people that are very process focused. I think in policing, you know, we've really been obsessed with processes and rules. And we've rewarded people that can shuffle paperwork quickly, who will never question why that paperwork is being shuffled in the first place. And it's a vicious cycle that can cripple people and cripple organizations that are very traditional, process- and rules-driven. And so, what I've seen as a young officer, and what I've seen growing and developing, especially in the last 10 to 12 years, is a lot of examples of people that I would never want to be like."
(Participant 12)

"I've had a few that had a negative influence on me, but that actually made me want to not be like them." (Participant 20)

Whether influencers had a positive or negative impact on police officers, it's clear that officers are highly affected by those closest to them: family and friends, Coach Officers, trainers, and on-the-job mentors.

The Role of Organizational Values

Participants were also asked to evaluate their police service's organizational values. Studies on organizations and their cultures have typically found that workplace cultures have a significant impact on improving worker performance, job satisfaction, and other workplace variables, that are positively linked with leadership behavior and job satisfaction. In particular, leadership behavior has a significant impact on job satisfaction[134] [135] [136].

Similar to how they defined their own personal values, participants were asked to think of words that best described what they saw as their police organization's values. The words participants chose conveyed the strong feelings they had in terms of their organizations living up to deeply held personal values officers naturally wished to see reflected in their workplaces. Those who believed their police service held positive values generally portrayed these values in two ways: (1) policing as a public service, (2) policing, as an institution, is changing to be more progressive and diverse.

On the other hand, those who held a negative view of their police service's perceived or stated organizational values largely placed the blame on senior management, suggesting that management has lost or neglected "traditional" policing values of law and order (3), did not care for or support frontline officers (5), actively sought to appease "certain" people or groups (3) or failed to counter media narratives that police officers are "racist".

It is not surprising that participants generally provided significant contrasting views in relation to how they saw their police service based on their own personal and professional experiences. For some, their pride in their policing profession extended positively to their organization in two distinct ways: their service was seen as progressive and change-oriented and/or exhibited noble attributes which reflected their own values:

Progressive and change-oriented (mentions):	Noble attributes (mentions):
- Help people/people-focused/collaboration (12) - Diversity (7) - Change (4) - Progressive (3) - Team focused (3)	- Accountable/Trusted (5) - Work ethic/hard work (1) - Transparency (1) - Honesty (1) - Respectful (1) - Commitment to education/training (1)

For those participants who responded in a positive manner, progressive and change-oriented organizational values indicated (1) an intentional institutional move to better respond to contemporary social needs (e.g., better reflecting the diversity of their communities in the composition of the police service), and (2) an emphasis on modern policing models such as community policing (which emphasizes the systemic use of partnerships and problem-solving strategies to proactively address issues that drive public safety issues like crime and public disorder[137]) and Active Bystandership for Law Enforcement training (a tool that focuses on creating a transformational cultural shift which supports peer intervention to counter police officer misconduc[138]. Such participants supported organizational values changes from traditional law-and-order approaches (especially on social issues such as diversity). According to one senior officer:

> *"How much change we've gone through here? 100% I think it's changed for the better. It's just selling that idea. And I think our values are to be respectful to everyone. I think*

we're starting to be more of a humble organization, that we can't do it all. And we don't

have all the answers." **(Participant 11)**

Participants who believed their organizational values to be progressive and change-oriented often varied in how their police services actually delivered on introducing and supporting positive, progressive changes to their police service, promoted values based on collaboration with the community, supporting officers' safety, well-being, and mental health, etc. Generally, they suggested these values were communicated or implemented through partnerships with the communities (e.g., emphasis on diversity, public communication), institutional policies (written policies and procedures, recruitments, promotional processes), or active promotion of noble values which promoted professionalism, accountability, and culture change:

(Mentions)
Diversity promotion (7)
Collaboration with the community (5)
Communications with the public (4)
New policies/procedures/technology (3)
Better recruitment (3)
Promote officer well-being/training/well-being
Promote professionalism (2)
Different way of doing things (1); Promote trust and accountability (1); Listen to members (1)

"I think 'progressive' would be a good word to describe it. I think shifting to more

community safety and well-being is very important right now." **(Participant 20)**

"Inclusiveness and partnerships with the community. Community safety and well-being." **(Participant 21)**

"I'm proud to be a member of the department. I believe in the fact that we are serving a community, and we need to do it the best of our ability. We need to have pride in who we are as an organization. And we need to reflect that into the community. And so, I think they do a good job of capturing that without saying, well, that phrase." **(Participant 23)**

Such officers have clearly bought into the need to move policing away from traditional law-and-order approaches to law enforcement and toward community-oriented approaches (e.g., community policing).

Diametrically opposed to these progressive views were those of participants who believed that their organization had moved away from traditional values of law –and order as indicated below:

Conflict/struggle to define support values/members:
- Management doesn't care/support (5)   - Appeasing certain people/groups (3)   - Lost values (2)   - People view cops as racists (1)   - No follow through on values by leaders/don't walk-the-talk (1)

This, they argued, caused conflict between the front-line officers and management (who were perceived to be "political" and more interested in appeasing certain groups such as community activists or elected officials rather than "supporting" their officers):

"Our organization is about appeasing certain backgrounds (or) groups over all else…I fully agree with it [diversity], but not at any cost. It should be diversity [that] includes everyone." **(Participant 2)**

"And one of the big things, especially with the native [Indigenous] thing… just because even if a cop does something stupid, okay, and because the guy's native, that doesn't mean it's a racial thing. He fucked up, the cop. He didn't do it because he's native. I tell people that all the time, you make a mistake, guy could be Asian, white boy, whatever it is. Just because, you know, even that George Floyd thing, which is disgusting. I'm not going to necessarily say they did that to him because he is Black. They did that to him because he's a criminal for one. But I mean, you know, I just don't understand why every time someone makes a mistake, if it's a different colour, why they think it's racial. I don't get it."
(Participant 4)

Participants who held these views generally blamed senior management for not "walking-the-talk" when it came to living up to the organization's stated values, while some specifically accused police managers of discouraging "proactive" policing or crime prevention (e.g., combatting crime):

(Mentions)
Management does not "walk-the-talk" (7)
Management discourages proactive policing (combating crime) (3)
Just power and control (1)

"I tell people that, you know, the frontline guys are working their butts off, they're trying their hardest, [but] we have no support. And that it's changed and that our administration doesn't care. They want to save some money." **(Participant 4)**

"I don't think there's as much of this ultimate plan or idea for our service, or any service, really, as management just comes and goes every five years, through the end of their career with different motivations. So… there's no real direction other than what comes out of email that day…Honesty, it's just fucking words that they're there." **(Participant 9)**

"It's a hypocritical kingdom… at times, you may feel some of not the values, but some of the processes and the procedure, maybe driven by [a] political agenda, and there is a political agenda behind what's happening… we're treated like mushrooms essentially…'We don't care about your input. And we're not telling you why we're doing it.' So, where is the respect, understanding, and transparency?" **(Participant 17)**

"…at times, you may feel some of not the values, but some of the processes and the procedures, maybe driven by political agenda, and there is a political agenda behind what's happening." **(Participant 16)**

To better understand how participants could have such differing views of their organizational values and their relation to how they are embodied, an analysis of the interview data was performed,

which revealed three distinct patterns of perceptions, two of which can be designated as positive toward the organizational values and one emphasizing conflict between managers (who develop and implement policies and procedures based on stated common values, goals, etc.) and the frontline officers or their union representatives:

(Mentions)
Progression and change:
- Change (4)   - Progressive (3)   - Diversity (7)   - Work ethic/hard work (1)   - Team focused (3)   - Help people/people-focused/collaboration (12)
Noble attributes:
- Transparency (1)   - Honesty (1)   - Accountable/Trusted (5)   - Respectful (1)   - Commitment to education/training (1)
Conflict/struggle to define support values/members:
- Appeasing certain people/groups (3)   - People view cops as racists (1)   - Management doesn't care/support (5)   - Lost values/Do not know (2)   - Follow through on values? (1)

The very real divide between participants on the question of organizational values may be indicative of a number of things:

- the nature of management-frontline relationships characterized by uncertainty on the part of frontline officers with regard to supervisory expectations and scrutiny[139],

- the distinct and different cultures of the frontline "street" officers and police managers (who are responsible for running the police organization and accountable to civilian oversight)[140]
- police unions' emphasis on "blue solidarity" (which may or may not be publicly opposed by police managers)[141].

It could further indicate a fundamental disagreement between frontline officers (and their unions) with police managers along the lines of police officers being (1) "guardians" (service, noble attributes, collaboration' change) or (2) "warriors" (conflict with management; conflict with community groups, politicians, etc., lost values/management don't walk-the-talk).

When asked whether the organizational values reflected their own personal values, most participants either agreed with the stated values of their police service (core values have remained constant for them, changed for the better), or did not have a strong opinion on the matter. However, a number of participants (11) reiterated their belief that the police service actively undermined traditional law enforcement values by:

(Mentions)
• Too much emphasis on diversity and not enough on basic law enforcement (2)
• Recruiting standards gave been lowered because of diversity (2)
• Values not acted on (2)
• Policing was better in the past (1)
• It's still us (frontline) versus them (management) (1)
• Management protects its own (1)
• Too much tokenism (1)
• Values only acted on by frontline cops (1)

While even these participants with negative comments generally agreed with the organizational values, it is clear that there is an unease with the modern police service making even tentative efforts to be more inclusive. This could include, for example, promoting members of groups who have traditionally not been represented in police leadership and recruitment and even suffered oppression at the hands of law enforcement organizations, acknowledging that police have contributed to injustice by their past actions in the community or promoting progressive approaches as to how officers are expected to interact with the public (e.g., more problem-solving or community policing and less focus on crime suppression).

Most participants indicated that their organization's values have changed or evolved during their career, with most agreeing that the stated organizational values were positive. However, some argued that management either does not live up to the ideals or actively undermine the frontline officers and their ability to do their primary job, which is perceived to be traditional law enforcement:

Mentions
Yes: • Change is good (6)   • Learning from the past/culture change (2)   • More progressive/ethical/new leadership, younger officers (7)   • Bridging the gap between police and community (1)   • Core values have remained the same (3)   • Diversity (not tokenism) (2)
Yes, but…   • Yes, but recruiting standards are lower (1)   • Yes, but are senior leaders following through? (1)   • Yes, but need more partnerships (1)

> No:
> - Values have remained the same/no systemic change (2)
> - Negative change (2)

"It's gotten a lot better. It's gotten a lot more fair. The honesty, you know, has gotten a lot better. I'd say there's been a lot more honesty and acknowledgement as well of the issues. Before, it was kind of like, 'Oh, no, no, we're a perfect service. And no, that didn't happen. I'll have to look into that.' When really, you're like, 'No, that actually did happen, and you're trying to cover it up.' Let's just be honest [and] fall on the sword. And that's how you get people's respect and move on and move forward." **(Participant 7)**

"When I started, it was all about numbers, numbers, numbers, numbers. Now, they're more trying to solve problems. So, I do believe that, yes, a big shift, then. It is a huge shift." **(Participant 21)**

"The day-to-day operations; same, nothing changes. The job in itself is relentlessly the same. It's just whether or not you have good training, good support, in a good relationship with management or if you're working out of fear, intimidation, and bullying tactics. So, it, I don't think it's really changed all that much. It can't really change that much without a real systemic change." **(Participant 9)**

Again, the power dynamics in policing are not fundamentally being challenged here. Participants generally recognized that change is inevitable in organizations involved in public service. However, officers either believe that more incremental change is needed (ones that don't necessarily involve fundamental changes to the power structures – hierarchy/rank, internal reporting processes, operational versus civilian governance – in policing) or believe that policing standards are being lowered for "political" purposes rather than crime fighting objectives.

The Role of Culture Change

While the pillars of police culture, such as group solidarity, remain strong for most participants, culture change is something that participants generally acknowledged was important. However, "change" had differing meanings for participants. For some, it meant entrenching policing in a community-service mindset where community policing fundamentally changes the ethos of a police organization:

> *"It's our cultural assessment right now. I think it's paramount, I think it's probably one of the most important things that we have on the go. Because as the saying goes, 'Culture can eat strategy for breakfast', right? It's like all the strategies and plans and management plans, and all these things we want to put forward to meet our strat plan, [they] mean nothing if our culture doesn't support it."* **(Participant 11)**

For others, culture change is structural; specifically, mid-level managers who are often seen as resistant to changes need to be removed if fundamental, progressive changes are to be entrenched in the service:

> *"We still have mid-level managers that don't really understand what the changes mean, to them personally and in their day-to-day work. You know, they should be evaluating whether our current practices are helping or harming the community."* **(Participant 12)**

But for others, the "talk" of change does not resonate with frontline officers. This could mean that officers do not see upper management "walking-the-talk" or are perceived to be making changes for "political" reasons. On the other hand, frontline officers are likely to be fully indoctrinated with the traditional police culture's views about the dangers of the job and are naturally suspicious of changes they view as not having the best interests of officers' safety in mind:

> *"I think we need a change in the police culture. As much as upper management might be all for it, I think what still happens with folks like, you know, with their boots on the ground is a totally different world."* **(Participant 20)**

Whatever culture change means for the individual officer, the discussion here is not about challenging the existence of the culture itself, but how it impacts the day-to-day workings of the police organization and making it better in terms of workplace experiences. Participants want to see the police culture "work" for them. Whether it's because change is not fast enough or management does not support the change for the betterment of officers, the culture seems to be a de facto part of the officer's identity. In other words, it matters to them, and they want to see the culture support their work as law enforcement professionals.

Approaches to Cultural Change

When asked to provide suggestions for making their police organization accomplish its goals and/or meet its stated values, participants' responses varied widely. Suggestions can be grouped into four distinct areas:

1. Changes involving training, officer wellness, discipline, and police culture

2. Changes to management of the service

3. Get back to traditional policing

4. Engagement with communities

- Mental health (3)
- Discipline/accountability (2)
- Change internal police culture (2)
- Training (1)
- More diversity (1)
- Fix promotional process/job assignments (3)
- Support officers 100% (2)
- Hold management accountable (1)
- Transparency in discipline system (1)
- Better leadership (1)
- Empower police members (1)
- Don't run policing like a business (1)
- Back to LE/protecting people (not social workers) (3)
- Listen less to "vocal minority" (1)
- Hire more officers (1)
- Build community trust (3)
- Community townhalls (1)
- Let officers interact more with the public (restaurants) (1)
- Consult more with officers and public (1)

Management Issues and Impact on Identity

Policing continues to experience significant management-worker conflict, often as a result of police union (often called "associations" in Canada) strategies designed to safeguard gains in salary and benefits for officers, resistance to disciplinary measures by the service, and protect the health and safety of officers[142] [143] [144].

Police unions have traditionally been strong supporters and promoters of constructing a "blue solidarity" among police officers which differs from other labour groups and social movements such as Black Lives Matter and #MeToo. They often promote a privileged status for their own members in relation to the working class, more generally[145]. Further, research has found that such police groups mobilize "thin blue line" narratives and the maintenance of a "blue wall of silence" that promotes the role of police in their communities while sidestepping critical

views of police misconduct[146]. Further, Isaak, and Walby[147] argued that police union communications specifically aim to provide "horizontal legitimacy spillover", legitimizing not only the traditional law enforcement role of police officers in Canada, but the police institution itself.

In this context, police unions reinforce a traditional view of police officers which protects police power, emphasizes police work as dangerous, and stresses the need for officers to maintain a separate identity from the people they serve[148]. This may result in resistance to progressive policing practices and progressive change in areas such as diversity and inclusion, police violence, holding officers more accountable for their actions, etc., with Levin[149] going so far as to state that "police unions have become public enemy number one for commentators concerned about race and police violence" (p. 1333). However, some Canadian police union leaders have started to call for changes to the police culture to address wellness issues such as mental health challenges for frontline officers[150].

Those participants who were particularly involved in their police union suggested that culture change needed to start with changes in management:

"The thing for me is because since I've been on the job, the biggest thing that's always been the bone of contention, and the thing is…who gets selected for which jobs, and promotionals. I think you need an outside agency with no ties to individuals."
(Participant 4)

They also suggested that police leaders lose the ability to communicate and understand the needs of the frontline officer as they progress to management positions and that this creates a leadership vacuum:

"You can teach management, you can't teach leadership; leadership is in you, it's in you or it's not in you. If you don't have the ability to talk to a frontline officer like a normal cop, then there's issues you'll never get there." **(Participant 6)**

Not surprisingly, a strong undercurrent of change versus traditional law enforcement runs through responses, particularly among those participants who identified strongly with their police unions:

"I think all association executives should be doing a yearly review of management and submitting it to the police service board, whether they want it or not. Because really, there's nothing. There is absolutely nothing that holds them accountable." **(Participant 9)**

The hierarchal, paramilitary structure of police organizations inherently differentiates between frontline officers and management. This can result in workplace stress and conflict. It is, therefore, not surprising that frontline officers in particular (and especially those involved in their police union) would often have strong feelings about their supervisors and the organization in which they work in.

Recommendations

Change within policing requires formal structural changes involving recruitment, training, policies, procedures, promotional and discipline processes, and accountability. Yet, this study found that police officers maintain a strong adherence to the traditional norms and values of the profession. Changes to how officers construct their identities as police professionals will involve a fundamental rethinking about police officers and their roles and inevitably requires a reassessment in identity-building through training, education, policies, workplace supports, etc. It also inevitably raises the question of how officers' self-identification should be constructed in order to better reflect whichever mindset is desired for law enforcement personnel. This ultimately requires a rethinking about the power dynamics in policing and is reflected in the debate on whether police officers today are "guardians" or "warriors".

Guardian proponents use language that denotes altruism and service (e.g., "service", "collaboration") while warriors maintain more law-and-order-oriented language about social/criminal conflict and crime-fighting[151][152]. This translates into how officers see their own values in their organization's stated values and whether the police service as an entity "walks-the-talk".

Police leaders must be intentional in pursuing changes to the basic tenets of their profession. This is not easily done. Policing and its police culture have and continue to be conservative in nature. Change does not come easily to those leading the profession nor to those on the frontline. For example, being intentional in promoting members of groups who have traditionally not been represented in police leadership and recruitment and even suffered oppression at the hands of law enforcement organizations has proven to be difficult in practice, even if police members at all levels of policing agree in principle to the goals on inclusive and reflective police services. Acknowledging that police have contributed to injustice by their past actions in the community or promoting progressive

approaches as to how officers are expected to interact with the public (e.g., more problem-solving or community policing and less focus on crime suppression) is an easy practice. But these goals must be pursued if policing is to change to meet today's community safety needs.

The following recommendations emerged from the interview data and specifically consider the power dynamics that shape policing in Canada and the professional identity of police officers:

Decide: Guardians or Warriors? Both?

Organizational cultures are based on values, beliefs, and assumptions[152], which members are expected to not only adhere to, but embrace. In policing, an institution particularly based on power dynamics – the wielding of it by members, the disciplining of members to both ensure adherence to legislated professional expectations and to guard against abuse of power by police officers – the unique police culture continues to wield enormous influence on identity-building for police officers.

Participants in this study generally did not question organizational values (for example, crime fighting), but rather how organizational leaders delivered on those values and goals and whether officers are supported in keeping people and communities "safe". This has led to a significant debate between some frontline officers (and their unions) and others within police organizations as to whether police officers are expected to be "guardians" or "warriors"[153 154 155]. This is a "mindset debate", which involves a re-thinking about police officers and their roles. It requires a reassessment of identity-building through appropriate training, education, policies, workplace supports, etc. Inevitably how officers' self-identification is constructed from the time they are recruited into the service to ongoing training and daily workplace experiences and interactions.

This is a difficult debate to have, particularly given the significant divide between powerful police unions and management, as expressed by a number of participants. Changing the power dynamics of policing – organizational structures, service delivery models, officer education and

promotion frameworks, etc. – requires the support of police unions and frontline officers as well as a commitment by police management to push forward change. The mistrust on the part of frontline police officers of their own leaders as well as the perceived "talking" but "no action" on significant issues impacting the workplace experiences and well-being of police officers, are barriers to fundamental changes within the profession. This tends to perpetuate the traditional police culture and influence current and future officers to resist fundamental changes at a time when much of the public they serve expects change.

The absence of the militarization issue from the interviews with this study's participants may indicate that police officers in Canada do not fully appreciate the public and academic debate[156] [157] [158] [159] on the issue and its impact on issues such as public trust and confidence in the police. This is an indication that police officers may largely accept their roles as "warriors" even if they express support for community policing and non-coercive engagement with citizens (since participants who held views that expressed support for progressive, community-focused policing also largely expressed support for "crime fighting" and other traditional police roles).

Fundamentally, Canadian police leaders need to clearly articulate what they want police officers' identity to be based on: guardians or warriors – or perhaps a combination of the two concepts. The continued paramilitary training employed by police instructors and trainers, Coaching Officers, etc., and the hierarchal, command-and-control structures of police services indicate that police leaders may not be "walking-the-talk" when it comes to the empowering principles of community policing and police-community partnerships and collaboration.

Participants were clearly concerned about how police officers are taught, the methods used in knowledge transfer, and often the material itself does not always reflect the learning needs of today's police officers. Moreover, this disconnect draws passionate responses from many participants who are

frontline officers because it directly impacts their daily work experience. The "talk" that often is communicated by police organizational leaders through police policies and procedures or communicated to the public did not, in their opinion, become a reality when it came to those with "boots-on-the-ground". When participants use phrases such as *"our administration doesn't care. They want to save some money"* (Participant 4), "*there's no real direction other than what comes out of email that day…Honesty, it's just fucking words..."* (Participant 9), *"It's a hypocritical kingdom…" (Participant 17)*, and "*there is a political agenda behind what's happening"* (Participant 16), there is clearly a problem between those who set policies in the police organization and those who must deliver policing services in the community.

Today's police officers must be encouraged to build their self-identities based on the guardian model as their "default" lens through which they do their jobs. Self-identity is a driver through which individuals see themselves and act in their personal as well as their professional lives. Given their prime role as law enforcers in democratic societies, police officers will always need to be trained and educated to perform the law enforcement duties sometimes required to ensuring public safety and well-being. However, I posit that the training officers receive in their police academies and organizations, the workplace policies and supervisory oversight under which they operate, and the workplace norms and values that are accepted and promoted throughout the police hierarchal structure must be turned toward the constant promotion of police officers as public servants; as the peoples' guardians. This contrasts with the continued emphasis in training on a paramilitary enforcement of the law, the trend towards the militarization of policing in North America, the glorification of warrior cops in popular culture, etc.

Through the CACP, police leaders must define the issue and clearly articulate a narrative on what a police officer is expected to be and demonstrate, one that permeates every level of their

organizations – recruitment, and training, open and fair management and disciplining, empowering officers in community engagement, promotion of diversity and inclusion, etc. This will require honestly confronting concepts like group solidarity, which positions officers to see themselves as a closed group rather than citizens empowered by their fellow citizens to protect the interests of the community's general welfare.

CACP members, as Canada's police leaders, need to demonstrate their commitment to fundamental changes to not only the structures and policies that govern policing in Canada, but even challenge some of the fundamental tenets of the police culture, which perpetuates policing norms and values that may present barriers to more inclusive and community-service oriented policing. These could involve, but are not exclusive to changes involving training, officer wellness, discipline, system, the management of police services, balancing the needs of the community with officers' obligations to enforce laws, and enhanced engagement with communities, especially those who traditionally have been oppressed by police.

Addressing the Management-Union Divide

While not all participants in this study mentioned management-union issues, many participants emphasized a "gap" between senior managers and frontline officers. Given that police unions represent their members' interests when it comes to salary, benefits, health-and-safety, etc., challenge management hierarchies, and enjoy significant political power[160][161], their role in shaping police officers' professional identity cannot be underestimated. Thus, police managers must recognize the need to collaborate with police unions to initiate and embed organizational and operational change (including how police officers perceive their professional lives).

Part of the challenge for police unions in collaborating with police managers on progressive change in the policing profession (which inevitably impacts how police officers construct their professional identities) is rooted in both history and outlook. Police unions in Canada have been tremendously successful in constraining police management power by ensuring many issues are subject to collective bargaining. Their success in labour relations and in setting themselves as powerful political entities means that, according to Fleming et al.[162], police unions have the potential to constitute themselves as, "active, forward-thinking social agencies within policing networking arrangements" (p. 71), which would seem to align with many police organizations' goals for promoting public trust and confidence in the institution of policing. They further argue that police unions will need to move beyond the demands of their "conservative social base and preoccupation with industrial issues" in order to deliver on their potential as change agents (p. 71). This is critically important in relation to officers' identity building.

It's clear that the power of police unions plays a significant part in the building of professional identity for the frontline officer, especially since the vast majority of police officers are not in a "management" or "supervisor" position. Even if police management is keen on changing the power dynamics of policing – in changing organizational structures, service delivery models, officer education and promotion frameworks, etc. – how policing is communicated and expressed stands little chance of fundamental changes without the support of police unions and frontline officers. The closing of the gap or divide between senior police leaders and frontline officers is critical to bringing about practical changes to contemporary policing.

Like in any profession, police officers are conditioned to adhere to occupational norms. Participants in this study expressed differing viewpoints on such issues as law enforcement, community policing, and labour-management relations. But all participants exhibited common

tendencies toward pride in the profession, and its values and norms, an admirable care for their peers, and a common interest in seeing policing be "better" (although how to make it better was a question of perception).

Police unions in North America will continue to exert political clout and retain the ability to negotiate effectively on behalf of their members. Given this, effective reform of policing as an institution and any positive change in the self-perception of police officers as guardians as well as warriors will require buy-in from their unions. I argue that police managers and unions leaders must move beyond traditional mistrust and commit to system change because officers are common members to both groups. Police unions must become true partners with police managers, government policy decision-makers, and the public in "unfreezing" a police culture traditionally resistant to change and drive that change, for the benefit of their members as well as the profession al as a whole.

The CACP and its provincial affiliates must seek ways to invite partnerships with police unions that demonstrate a shared commitment to progressive change, which also acknowledges the hard work and stresses that police officers undergo as part of their work. There will always be naturally occurring, local human resource conflicts within police services. They are part of collective bargaining processes, workplace discipline, and accountability systems, etc. Since policing in Canada is a provincial responsibility, the CACP is uniquely positioned to work at a "macro" level with national police union partners to broach systemic issues that can permeate down to provincial and local levels and influence issues such as recruitment and training, which powerfully influences how police officers construct their sense of professional identity.

Recruitment as Identity-Building

The recruitment of new police officers is not only an organizational imperative for police services but acts as a prime opportunity in the construction of police officers' identity. The recruitment

process is usually the start of the process of officer socialization. Even if recruits come into the recruitment process with preconceived ideas of what it means to be a police officer or bring in their own values, assumptions, and beliefs, it is at the recruitment phase that policing starts to mold the recruit from civilians into a desired "organizational ideal" [163].

Police services in North America continue to face significant challenges in recruiting new officers[164]. Wilson[165] cited a threefold challenge in meeting the demand for new police officers in North American police organizations:

1. attrition is likely to increase,

2. sources of new recruits might be decreasing, and

3. police responsibilities are expanding.

Recruitment challenges are particularly acute when it comes to efforts to diversify police organizations that have not reflected their communities in terms of having officers from non-White racial groups, people who identify as females, members of 2SLGBTQ+ communities, etc.[166][167][168]. The profession remains overwhelmingly male and White in terms of demographics as indicated by data on self-identification by recruits between 2010-2020 to policing in the Province of Ontario, Canada:

- Males made up 76.2% of recruits into policing compared to females (23.7%)

- Visible minorities and Indigenous recruits represented 18.1% of recruits (T. Fryer, Personal correspondence, August 2, 2022).

Nationally, there were 15,268 female police officers in Canada in 2019, an increase of 325 officers compared to the previous year. Female officers accounted for 22% of total sworn officers in 2019, a proportion that has been increasing steadily since Statistics Canada began its survey on police

resources in Canada in 1986. Females accounted for just under 4% of all Canadian police officers in 1986[169].

In terms of non-White recruits in general, police officers designated as "visible minority population" as defined by Canada's *Employment Equity Act* represented 22% of Canada's population, (according to the 2016 Census.) In 2019, 8% of all police officers (unchanged from the previous year) and 11% of recruits in Canada (down 1% in 2018) identified as visible minorities. Visible minority officers were most prevalent in First Nation police services (24%), the RCMP (12%), and stand-alone municipal services (7%). Indigenous police officers represented 4% of all police officers in Canada[170].

Provincially, only British Columbia and Ontario have a higher percentage of non-visible minority police officers than the national average[171]`. As this table clearly indicates, nowhere in Canada is the number of visible minority police officers anywhere close to corresponding to the members of the community in their respective provinces.

Visible Minority Police Officers in Canada, 2016		
Province	**Visible Minority, General Population**	**Visible Minority, Police Officers (excluding Indigenous police officers**
Newfoundland & Labrador	2.3%	1.4%
Prince Edward Island	6.5%	4.8%
Nova Scotia	6.5%	4.5%
New Brunswick	3.4%	1.6%
Quebec	13%	3.6%
Ontario	29.3%	10.7%
Manitoba	17.5%	7.1%
Saskatchewan	10.8%	3.7%
Alberta	23.5%	7.5%
British Columbia	30.3%	15.6%
Yukon	8.5%	5.9%
Northwest Territories	9.6%	0%
Nunavut	2.5%	0%

Most participants in this study acknowledged the need for diversity within their services. However, it must be noted that some questioned whether the drive for diversity and inclusion was based more on "politics" than on recruiting "qualifications". It should not be surprising that police officers continue to insist on new recruits who can do "the job". Given that most officers are overwhelmingly White and male, this sometimes translates into perceived or actual resistance to diversity efforts and culture change in the police culture. Further, Weitzer[172] argued that regardless of personal background, most officers maintain a "blue" identity, which points to the powerful hold that the culture retains on its members through shared beliefs like policing work being "dangerous" and suspicion of those outside the profession.

The statistics demonstrate the long road ahead for policing to meet equity, diversity, and inclusion targets not just in recruitment, but in terms of police services' policies, procedures, and training practices. The CACP needs to revisit its 2018 Executive Global Studies Program report on "authentic inclusion" and determine how a decentralized profession (where policing is the purview of the provinces and local police services boards/commissions and police services guard their operational independence) can deliver tangible and systemic organizational and cultural changes. In fact, the need to find a "common voice" for policing in a decentralized profession was the main conclusion of the subsequent 2022 Executive Global Studies Program.

What the CACP can do is be intentional in its policy positions, work by its committees, and its educational and networking offerings, and provide Canadian police leaders with the information and tools to drive key concepts for change: continued emphasis on equity and inclusion, critical thinking, community-focused policing, and changing the discourse in policing in workplace language and organizational/operational practices. While police services themselves are responsible for recruiting the next generation of officers, a common, national approach to consistent narratives about what

policing is and what kinds of people police organizations are seeking can and should be led from a national level. The CACP's goals in this area should be ones identified by Vermeer et al.[173]: higher trust in the police, positive public perceptions of police fairness, and greater knowledge of potential police career opportunities.

Participants in this study offered some unique insights into what effective recruitments strategies might include:

- Do not discount or underestimate the power of candidates' families and loved ones in the recruiting process. This suggests that police organizations should place greater emphasis on outreach and interaction with not just potential recruits, but also their families, schools, and other early influencers.

- Policing as a career choice needs to speak with a common narrative about what policing is and what being a police officer means. Citizens do not care about the patch on the police officer's shoulders. While Canadian policing is varied (national, provincial, local, and Indigenous police services serving different language and cultural groups spanning a continent), the public sees policing as one institution (particularly at a time of need)

- Honestly, address law enforcement's uncomfortable past when developing grand narratives about what policing is and is not.

Police Training: From Paramilitary to Public Service?

Participants in this study shared their experiences with police-specific training. Traditional recruit training was (and still is) based on an apprenticeship model that includes short-duration classroom instruction in a police college/academy and in-service instruction, as well as on-the-job learning from an experienced officer (e.g., Coach Officers)[174][175][176]. The training that officers get as

new recruits and on-going throughout their career is not only designed to prepare them to do their jobs, but also acts to socialize officers into a way of thinking and acting as police officers. Charman[177] identified situated training in policing as a key building block in the formal building of police identity, acting to transfer knowledge to officers based on power that is ingrained into the officer's professional identity. Training thus reinforces a strict police organizational hierarchy, paramilitary teaching structures, physical training, and in-service training through a "hidden curriculum", which promotes traditional police cultural prejudices around crime fighting versus community policing[178].

Police training must incorporate officer wellness and resiliency into police academy training and in-service training. Further, it must be incorporated into the on-the-job formal and informal training and socialization that officers are subjected to, not just the formal training in the police academy or in-service training. Making this type of training as important as the training officers traditionally received to do their jobs (e.g., use of force) will send a strong signal to police officers that their mental health and well-being matter to their employers, counter the traditional stigma in policing around being "weak" for speaking up about mental health challenges, foster positive workplaces, and enhance organizational effectiveness. In other words, police leaders must elevate training for "soft" policing alongside specialty training to provide a training balance that meets contemporary community safety and crime fighting needs.

In recent years, police training in Canada has increasingly been the focus of public and academic scrutiny in light of concerns about police use of force and the militarization of policing. While police have emphasized the incorporation of officer training in such areas of building community resiliency through community policing and crime prevention, police training retains an ethos that legitimizes a competitive, masculine occupational norm emphasizing traditional crime fighting[180]. This norm springs from the nature of policing, which exposes officers to dangers in responding to real or potential

criminal acts as well as from police culture, with its hypermasculine characteristic and perpetuation of traditional power structures that do not reflect the needs for diverse, community-based policing services.

Police training that focuses largely on the law or on "perishable skills" such as arrest and control, defensive tactics, driving, and firearms will not assist police officer in developing their identity as one of service to their community. A police officer who sees him or herself as a public servant require training from the academy and on-going through their community that combines traditional law enforcement skills with the psychological skills that help officers navigate the changing nature of crime and contemporary social challenges to police work.

Policing training curricula and methods need to evolve to meet contemporary policing challenges (particularly around equity and diversity issues, police legitimacy, trust and confidence issue, and officer wellness). The various kinds of training available to police officers – mandatory skills training (e.g., use of force), police speciality training (e.g., homicide investigations, traffic enforcement, public order, etc.), and training on issues beyond traditional law enforcement (e.g., diversity training, community collaboration, mental health, and wellness, etc.) – set the groundwork for identity-building. While participants in this study generally indicated that police training continues to reinforce traditional power relations in policing that emphasize the supremacy in the role of instructors, Coach Officers, and supervisors in the field, there was a felt need to balance traditional mandatory and specialty training with training on contemporary, community-based issues.

Participants indicated they expected to have access to relevant training that equips them to do the traditional job of the law enforcer tempered by the need to master contemporary community safety needs around diversity, human rights, collaboration with the community, etc. In other words,

participants in this study expected expert training in basic police skills *and* transfer knowledge on issues that involve human rights, victims-focused issues, and being able to meet the social as well as community safety needs that officers are increasingly being called to deal with (e.g., mental health and addictions).

Officers need to be empowered to do community-building work and be rewarded for that work. The continued adherence to traditional approaches to career advancement through specialty training and unquestioning submission to superior officers need to be augmented with problem-solving strategies such as positive deviance (focusing on the positive influencers in policing who succeed in non-traditional ways) and appreciative inquiry (where the emphasis is on opportunities, strengths, positive achievements, etc. to problems)[180].

The CACP must clearly identify its role in supporting changes to the education and training of police officers in Canada. The association's 2021-2023 list of priority issues does not list training and education among its priority issues. The debate around police training needs a national voice that can support local police efforts to address training issues to reflect public priorities. For example, the Edmonton Police Service's 2021 *Commitment to Action Report* devoted an entire section to public expectations on officer training wherein the public asked for:

- Regular review and adjustment of new recruit and officer training that enhances tools for "empathy, critical thinking, cultural humility, and trauma-informed practices"

- Collaboration with social agencies, cultural and community organizations on the development of training

- Work with community partners to build a better understanding of trauma-informed policing, victimization, compassion, and use of tone and body language in the course of day-to-day policing

- Provide opportunities for "identify-learning opportunities" for veteran officers[181] (p. 12).

- Developing common training standards across Canada that reflect the aspirations and expectations of the public while leaving room for local considerations to be considered (e.g., Indigenous communities) would significantly impact identity-building processes for Canadian police officers.

Limitations

Ideally, research involving identification building and cultural attitudes would involve longitudinal research, which would follow a group of participants to assess changing attitudes, values, beliefs, etc., and evaluate influences on the individuals. Because of the constraints of this study, the research should be considered as a snapshot in time of the research participants.

Ethics Statement

While the study takes a critical approach to police culture and police organizations, I acknowledge that I am employed by a police organization, which could be seen as a potential conflict of interest in producing academic work that is critical of current police structures and practices. This is also particularly important given concerns raised by some researchers in Canada about the ethics around partnerships between researchers and police organizations following the deaths of Black people in Canada and the United States and concerns about systemic anti-Black and other forms of racism within law enforcement organizations[182]. I acknowledge that my association with law enforcement organizations may raise concerns around objectivity and even the ability to be critical of police. However, I am not, nor have I ever been, a police officer. This is important given that sworn police officers are often firmly enculturated in their organizational culture while civilian members of police organizations appear to be less so[183][184][185].

The data generated by this study was constructed *with* participants rather than extracted *from* them. My role in a police organization afforded me opportunities to develop trust and confidence from police personnel across Canada (both management and frontline officers). However, as a civilian and academic researcher with demonstrated experience in working with groups of police officers to critically produce research that challenges traditional police norms[186][187], I am and will always remain

an outsider to the police culture simply by not being a sworn police officer. As a researcher, I have had

opportunities to build rapport but also maintain a level of inquisitiveness and critique due to my

distance from police culture.

Further Considerations on Police Culture and Officer Identity Construction

"Policing" has many meanings. It is a public service, a tool to enforce the state's laws, a profession, and a "brotherhood" for those in it. For police officers who must negotiate their place within the profession, understanding police work and its unique culture helps us understand the equally unique police identity.

The following information is provided as material for further reading in order to help the reader develop a deeper appreciation for police work, culture, and identity and aims to assist the reader in framing the context in which Canadian policing exists.

Police Work, Power, Culture, and Officer Identity

Police Work and Policing Power

Canadian police officers are authorized by legislative frameworks which define their roles, responsibilities, and powers through provincial legislation (or by federal legislation in the case of the national police service, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police) [188]. "Policing" is often synonymous with law enforcement and crime fighting. The public's perception of policing and police officers is influenced by public consumption of media portrayals of police officers as crime fighters and law enforcers[189] [190]. However, according to Robertson[191], policing is not synonymous with law enforcement. He argued that law enforcement is only one part of police work and that the contemporary police organization is, in fact, a social service agency responding to a "myriad of social ills" through police officers "trained to identity and solve problems quickly" (p. 351). This suggests that recruiting, training, and enforcing what it means to be a police officer must evolve from the traditional "law enforcer" or "warrior" approach to one that constructs the contemporary police officer as a public servant or "guardian" that is both law enforcer and social worker[192] [193] [194].

Kappeler et al.[195] argued that even before recruits are hired, police recruitment practices and selection systems tend to require candidates to demonstrate conformity to a select set of traditional, conservative norms and values and that, "Often, these tests are designed merely to determine applicants' physical prowess, sexual orientation, gender identification, financial stability, employment history, and abstinence from drug and alcohol abuse" (p. 89). Once at the police academy and in relation to identity-building, police officers immediately begin to develop their police identity through formal training and socialization. This is further enforced through in-service training, including with a Coach Officer[196][197]. Power and knowledge are immediately ingrained into the professional identity of the new officer and enforced at the police academy as soon as new recruits arrive. This is done by emphasizing a strict police organizational hierarchy, paramilitary teaching structures, physical training, etc. It is also carried on through subsequent in-service training and other mandatory and specialized training to further influence officers' perception of what it means to be a police officer, what White[198] described in a study of police training in England and Wales as a "hidden curriculum" that reinforces traditional police cultural prejudices around crime fighting versus community policing. He further posited that this training works against changes in police educational and organizational cultures. Informal interaction and mentoring with and by other police officers further engrain officers' values and attitudes.

Canadian policing has traditionally been organized around the *Nine Principles of Policing* attributed to Sir Robert Peel, under whom the passage of the *Metropolitan Police Act 1829* established a full-time, professional police force for London, United Kingdom, known as the Metropolitan Police. Peel saw policing as an extension of "good citizenship" (particularly Principle 7, "Police should maintain a relationship with the public that is based on the fact that the police are the public and the public are the police")[199.]

While Peelian Principles form the basis of the concept of "policing by consent" (the basis of which is the free consent of the public to be policed rather than a state-induced coercion[200]), policing since the mid-1800s has progressed through subsequent interpretations of what it means to "police", which directly impacted the identity of police officers. For example, the "professionalization" of policing – with its "emphasis on expertise, distrust of politics, the use of administrative structures, and the values of efficiency"[201] – began under future American President Theodore Roosevelt (when he was President of the Board of Commissioners for the New York City Police Department in 1895) and saw the limiting of policing to crime control[202]. Coupled with Roosevelt's emphasis on a "militaristic identity", Hunt[203] argued that this produced a "cowboy-crimefighter identity that led to the de facto professional identity for policing" (p. 24). Hunt further argued that such concepts are inconsistent with the police officer's role as a public servant and guardian of not just victims, but of the accused. In contrast to American policing and its "cowboy" identity, Canadian policing is based on the English "constabulary" concept of policing, where police inhabit a middle ground that combines military and police characteristics, often referred to as "paramilitary" in structure[204].

Wood[205] posited that police officers are part of an institution (policing) tied both to the state (which exists to consolidate and maintain political and social power among political, social, and economic groups) and the capitalist economic system. As an institution, it is an "authoritarian, command-and-control regime based on a military hierarchy"[206] (p. 130) rather than controlled by civilian managers[207]. A specific Canadian example of this is that in response to the growing militarization of policing in North America and growing public concerns over police actions against Indigenous peoples and protesters in Canada, Madsen[208] argued that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) protects the political, economic, and bureaucratic nation state interests of government. Maynard[209] and Henry[210] further argued that policing in Canada is driven by state-sanctioned violence

against Black Canadians with roots in the country's slave era history, while Cooper[211] traced anti-Indigenous and anti-Black state-sanctioned violence as far back as New France.

Policing is traditionally deeply conservative and protective of the state's interests. Police officers are influenced by a deeply embedded and unique institutional culture that rewards and values traditionally masculine concepts of bravery, toughness, and adherence to and respect for hierarchal chains of command[212]. This presents challenges for police officers in relation to balancing the principles of modern policing concepts (such as community policing) with traditional policing practices[213][214][215].

When considering how police officers today navigate the balancing of the traditional law enforcement precepts of the police culture with the community policing emphasis of modern law enforcement organizations, most quantitative research on police behavior has found only weak relationships between officers' attitudes and values and their behavior[216][217][218][219][220]. Instead, most studies have concluded that police behavior is based primarily on situational determinants rather than officers' attitudes[221]. This points to the crucial role not just of training for officers in how they respond to on-the-job situations, but also the organizational values they perceive to be important to service and how they reflect these values in their work.

The Concept of Police Culture

The concept of a distinct police culture originated from ethnographic studies of routine police work conducted in the second half of the 20th century[222]. Studies into police culture uncovered a "layer of informal occupational norms and values operating under the apparently rigid hierarchical structure of police organizations"[223] (p. 110).

The term "police culture" remains a contested term in both nomenclature and substance[224]. Reiner's[225] often cited conceptualization of the term argues that police culture is a patterned set of understandings aimed at assisting police officers to cope with their occupational stresses and understood through core characteristics. These include (1) mission-action-cynicism-pessimism, (2) suspicion of the public, (3) isolation from society and solidarity with fellow officers, (4) police conservatism, (5) machismo, (6) racial prejudice, and (7) pragmatism. The identity of police officers is thus constructed through this unique occupational culture, shares cultural attitudes (especially in relation to behaviour), and are subject to the collective effects (rather than individual attributes) of these shared attitudes in relation to the common strains of the job[226].

Westley[227] was among the first scholars to identify a unique police culture in North America, describing the police officer as feeling like a "pariah" and alienated from the rest of society because of public perceptions of officers as "corrupt and inefficient" (p. 54). Scholars in the decades following the 1950s generally identified police culture as having two distinct features: (1) officers feeling socially isolated and developing strong group solidarity, and (2) officers viewing the public as hostile, unsupportive, and unable to comprehend the realities of police work[228] [229] [230]. Contemporary scholars working in the "community policing era" – starting in the 1970s but entrenched in policing practices during the 1980s[231] – have increasingly challenged the assumption of one monolithic model of police culture[232] [233]. However, research continues to show a, "sustained, oversimplified, and unflinching attachment to the idea of police culture as monolithic, static, and negative"[234]. Police officers continue to see their identity through the lens of police culture.

The culture frames about what it means to be a "cop", and the cultural norms associated with this unique occupation, are engrained from the start of the recruitment process through the hiring and initial

training of officers. They are then constantly reenforced through workplace interactions, peer pressure, socialization, and in-group solidarity. In fact, Skolnick[235] argued that the police culture completely defines what it means to be a police officer by the traits that officers share, which Skolnick defines as, "skepticism, cynicism, mistrust of outsiders—all are traits observers of police apply to them and that they apply to themselves" (p. 36). In addition, Twersky-Glasner[236] argued that police officers are members of a unique occupation whose culture actively promotes the concept of police insiders and the rest of society as outsiders.

Duxbury et al.[237] attributed the persistence of the traditional police culture to change being (1) "driven from the top-down and outside-in"[238] (p. 8), (2) "glacial – slow and at times torturous" in terms of organizational change"[239] (p. 309), (3) generally slow and modest as well as often contentious and difficult[240][241], and (4) risky and either falling short of expectations or failing[242]. Thus, while some contemporary scholarship has tended to see an increasing emphasis on balancing the negative perception of police with more positive community policing-era police work[243][244][245][246][247], individual police officers must still negotiate their professional experiences within this unique occupational culture. This poses particular challenges for officers who do not belong to traditionally dominant groups within policing (e.g., females, racialized individuals, and 2SLGBTQ+ members)[248][249][250][251]. Personal and professional identity plays a significant role in the personal and professional lives of police officers.

Police Identity

There is no one universally accepted concept of "self" when it comes to the construction of an individual's personal identity[252]. Instead, self is viewed as constructed based on many different factors which influence our sense of who we are (e.g., culture, family structures, personal experiences, relationships, etc.), what Baumeister[253] called "an aggregate of loosely related subtopics" (p. 681).

Leary and Tangney[254] further argued that social and behavioural scientists have generally used "self" to refer variously to:

- the person as a "total person"

- a personal personality

- the "seat of self-awareness"

- a person's beliefs about themselves

- as the source of agency and volition (pp. 4, 5).

De Fina[255] described identity as being about conveying what kind of person someone is, including which geographic, ethnic, and social communities they "belong to", as well as where a person stands in relation to deeply personal ethical and moral questions and where their loyalties lie (p. 263). For a police officer, their sense-of-self or identity as law enforcement professionals often become inseparable from their personal identity, as described by Ahern[256]:

> The day a new recruit walks through the door of the police academy, he leaves
>
> society behind to enter a profession that does more than give him a job, it defines
>
> who he is. He will always be a cop (p. 168).

In policing, the construction of an identity as a police officer is a process where people engage in, "forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising" their sense of "coherence and distinctiveness" as police professionals[257] (p. 1165). This identity construction is a self-reflective process in which people build their self-perception out of their experiences within a specific social environment, namely the unique police culture, and workplace[258]. Change within such a professional culture requires both formal structural changes involving recruitment, training, policies, procedures, and accountability, as well as officers' personal changes in relation to adherence to assumptions, values, and beliefs about what it means to be a police officer.

Schein and Schein[259] identified three levels of culture that have a bearing on the construction of self-identity for individuals within highly structured organizations such as policing:

(1) visible artifacts

(2) espoused beliefs and values

(3) basic underlying assumptions (unconscious taken for granted beliefs and values which are not visible).

Further, the assumptions embedded in organizational cultures have the greatest bearing on members of such organizations since individuals seek stability, and any challenge to deeply held assumptions generally causes both anxiety and defensiveness. Social group classifications strongly influence assumptions, values, and beliefs. Specific to identity construction and maintenance, Social Identity Theory (SIT) has been one of the most significant conceptual frameworks used by researchers considering both social change and self-identity issues[260]. This has a bearing on policing, particularly in the areas of deviant and non-conforming behaviour and police misconduct [261], officers' interaction with members of the public[262 263 264], professional identity[265 266 267], and social and material rewards [268].

SIT addresses issues related to how police officers legitimize their sense of self as police officers, their interactions with the public, and their sense of collective identity within police organizations. The construction of a police officer's identity rests on the distinction between collective self-identity (social group identity) and the individual self (personal identity)[269]. From the start of the recruitment process to their initial and on-going training and socialization, a police officer is more likely to favor members of their "ingroup" (e.g., fellow officers) over members of "outgroups" (e.g., anyone who is not a police officer, including members of the public) because of perceived differences between these groups and a lack of understanding about what it means to be a police officer by non-members. This can also include inter-police group conflicts such as front-line police officers versus

police management[270 271 272 273]. The police officer thus focuses on adherence to ingroup norms to promote group security, an attraction to ingroup members, and an "us" versus "them" mentality[274 275 276.] Police officers, like other professional groups, find legitimacy, stability, and permeability as well as a distinctive social identity in the forming of their unique professional identity[277], which frames their development of personal identities as well as interpersonal friendships and enmities both within the police profession and in their private lives[278].

Police Officers' Personal and Professional Identity

The construction and promotion of a police officer's identity are done through both formal, vertical learning (e.g., new police recruit training and the on-going training for veteran officers) and informal, horizontal learning within the law enforcement workplace culture (e.g., through peer-to-peer and supervisor-to-subordinate interactions and discourses)[279] Further, Charman[280] argued that police officers' identities are constructed through three key concepts:

(1) police socialization

(2) situated learning

(3) the impact of social interaction in learning.

Such processes challenge officers' previous personal identities and shape the identities of individuals in navigating and validating lived experiences within a police organization[281 282].

Formal learning in the construction and maintenance of a police officer's identity has traditionally relied on vertical learning from trainers and tutors, typically at the police academy, to convey static knowledge of what it means to be a police officer and promote and perpetuate the unique police culture[283]. In such a setting, skills gained in higher education by new police recruits may be lost as they are "enculturated" into a deeply rooted, paramilitary organizational culture (p. 508). This

enculturation draws on cultural beliefs, rules, and values that have long been characterized as hypermasculine and reinforced by, "complex ensembles of values, attitudes, symbols, rites, recipes, and practices" that are unique to the law enforcement profession to form a unique police identity and inform their occupational performance[284] (p. 116). Vickers[285] further argued that police members might be taught to have a "pathological embrace" of rationalism through the need to give, "objective evidence, understand legal issues, and strictly adhere to legislative requirements, which act to suppress critical thinking" (p. 510) and shape their identity.

This formal learning is then enhanced by the informal or situated learning within the police workplace in influencing the behaviour and performance of police officers[286]. Karp and Stenmark[287] found that a "strong, professional norm" identified by police officers in the field is often conveyed back to the academy training environment and that the knowledge and skills valued by working officers tend to confirm traditional crime fighting skills over skills intended to promote and encourage change and development in the profession (p. 12).

Police officers informally develop their sense of what it means to be a "cop" through (1) "socialization", where officers are initiated into a police "brotherhood" as part of their training, socialize with one another, and tend to exclude non-police from their interaction, and (2) "solidarity", where officers develop a sense of "brotherhood", the "blue line", and "having one another's back"[288] (pp. 48, 52). Skolnick[289] further theorized that police officers develop their understanding of how to interpret conduct, retain loyalties, express opinions, and use authority largely from police organizational structures (p. 35). How officers choose to communicate, including the language used to both communicate and express occupational norms, conveys what is expected of police officers in terms of their identity and the values and beliefs they are expected to retain in order to guide their conduct[290].

The formal and informal training of police officers act to perpetuate the tradition-bound, hypermasculine, and paramilitary roots of police culture and resist challenges to accepted cultural norms. This includes perpetuating negative practices by police officers. Negative practices can include the misuse of authority, sexual harassment, discrimination against other police members, excessive use of force[291], and condoning informal but intentionally constructed police members' identity and norms that encourage police officers to place loyalty before integrity, often condoning corruption and tolerating unethical behaviour[292]. The continued construction and reinforcement of a hypermasculine image of policing thus create a significant barrier to the advancement of females and other groups traditionally underrepresented in policing[293]. For example, Davies and Thomas[294] explored how police services resisted more progressive forms of policing based on community orientation and equality principles. Their research showed that police organizations prefer to construct police officers' identities through policies and training that legitimize a competitive, masculine subjectivity that emphasizes traditional crime fighting rather than other policing goals, such as building community resiliency through community policing and crime prevention.

Davey[295] further found that Canadian female police officers reported having a negative self-perception that contributed to women not seeking promotions because they had to "prove themselves beyond the competencies of the desired position" and fear of being accused of benefiting from "tokenism" (p. 16). This again indicates how norms such as hypermasculinity in police culture are consistently constructed and reinforced so as to perpetuate the traditional characteristics of police culture. On the other hand, the constructing of police members' identity and culture has led to some positive behavioural outcomes, including police culture as a coping mechanism for occupational stress and the emphasis on the mutual protection and safety of police members[296][297][298].

Addendum A – Notes on Study Methodology

Interviews

In qualitative research, interviews have as their goal the seeing of the research topic from the perspective of the participants and how and why they come to their particular perspective (King, 2004). Thus, the interviews become texts which can yield insights into this study's main research question: how and why police officers construct and maintain their identities as sworn law enforcement professionals. An analysis of the text analyzes the interviews as a, "text with a describable and patterned thing made out of language but extending to other related signifying systems"[299] (p. 8).

Coding

The coding of the 30 interviews sought to discover what Richardson[300] and Carvalho[301] both defined as "critical discourse moments"; coding is thus a process used to thematically analyze textual data[302] where a code symbolically assigns a "summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or attribute for a portion of language-based or visual date"[303] (p. 3). Coding was based on a Constant Comparative Analysis (CCA) approach to data coding – whose principles generally involve beginning with the data and developing "codes", which then are categorized into "themes" that are further refined into "concepts"[304].

This study specifically applies a modified coding approach suggested by Saldana[305,] which begins with open coding, develops categories from the codes, further refines the categories into themes, and eventually sees the "theory" emerge from the data after considering the relationship between codes, categories, and themes. The data was coded involving a two-cycle process:

First-cycle coding

- Attribute coding (basic descriptive info)

- Holistic coding (identify a number of themes)

- Descriptive coding (identify subject of discourses – "what is talked about")

- Values coding (bias, ideology, etc.)

- Versus coding (conflicts)

Second-cycle coding

- Code synthesis – refine first stage coding into dominant themes or meanings

- Pattern coding – meaning within and across data that cohere into metalevel patterns

It should be noted that Saldana also identifies longitudinal coding as part of his coding method. However, this type of coding was not applicable to this study since the data was not captured over distinct time periods for comparison.

Addendum B – Basic Demographic Information,

Participants (Number of Respondents)

When did you become a police officer?	1985-1989 – 2 1990-1994 – 3 1995-1999 – 7 2000-2004 – 2 2005-2010 – 10 2011-2015 – 2 2016-2020 –4
How many years have you been a police officer?	1-5 Years – 4 officers 2 years – 1 3 years – 1 4 years – 1 5 years – 1 6-10 years – 2 officers 6 years – 1 7 years – 1 11-15 years – 9 officers 11 years – 2 12 years – 3 13 years – 1 15 years – 3 16-20 years – 2 officers 16 years – 1 18 years – 1 21-25 years – 6 officers 22 years – 3 23 years – 1 24 years – 2 26 to 30 years – 5 officers 26 years – 2

	27 years – 1 30 years – 2 31 to 35 years – 2 officers 33 years – 1 34 years – 1
Where have you serviced as an officer?	One officer spent 20 months with a special constable organization One officer transferred from a large provincial police service to a mid-sized municipal police service One officer served one year with a small municipal police service before transferring to a mid-sized municipal police service

Notes

Key Issues for Consideration

Addressing the Management-Union Divide

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Addendum A – Notes on Study Methodology

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