The Annual Review of Interdisciplinary Justice Research Volume 12, 2023

Edited by
Steven Kohm, Kevin Walby, Kelly Gorkoff, Katharina Maier, Alex Tepperman, Bronwyn Dobchuk-Land, and Amelia Curran
The University of Winnipeg
Centre for Interdisciplinary Justice Studies (CIJS)
ISSN 1925-2420 (Print)
ISSN 2816-4253 (Online)

IJR, 2023, Vol. 12, pp. 301-324

Consuming Interests: Some Critical Thoughts Upon the Occasion of a Proposal for a Canadian College of Policing

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Abstract

In 2022 the Canadian Coalition for Police Reform was founded and began calling for enhanced police professionalism in Canada, spearheading a campaign to establish a national Canadian College of Policing. Although establishing a federal institution of this kind seems unlikely in the present political context, the proposals provide an occasion to critically review the politics of policing in Canada. This paper argues for a better empirical understanding of networked policing if it is to be brought to account, but that continuing volatility in the moral economy that surrounds it prevents this. Observing the broader historical and geopolitical context of authoritarian drift in Western countries as they decay into post-democracies, this paper advances the view that police organization in Canada is also dangerously drifting toward soft authoritarianism.

Key words: Police accountability; police science; police legitimacy; authoritarian drift

Democratic police legitimacy in Canada and elsewhere in the West is in tatters (Roach, 2022; Vitale, 2017). Evidence of over-policing and under-policing in communities made socially vulnerable by economic distress, police militarization, combined with (often enough) poor coordination and operational failure, and police malfeasance are all grist for the mill of mainstream mass media in Canada (Rozier & Walby, 2019). One response to the situation has been the coming together of the Coalition for Canadian Police Reform (CCPR, undated, No. 1). According to the organization's website, it is "a group of concerned individuals who believe there is overwhelming evidence of a need for transformation in how police officers in Canada are educated and trained." These individuals believe such improvements will address the conditions of crisis by moving policing "towards professional

status just like every occupation that serves others: teachers, lawyers, doctors and others."

The project was initiated in a pair of opinion pieces published in the *Edmonton Journal*. One was by David Cassels, a former police officer with more than 30 years' experience, first in the Edmonton Police Service rising to the rank of deputy chief before becoming chief of the Winnipeg Police Service between 1996 and 1998. He wrote that police needed to shift from being "peace-makers" to "peace-keepers," that is, from heavy-handed policing to community policing (Cassels, 2020). A second view came from John Lilley, a former member of the Edmonton Police Service Commission, retired physician and clinical professor in the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry at the University of Alberta. He wrote about the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons and called for an analogous national college of policing for Canada. He worried that respect for police in Canadian society risked becoming irretrievably diminished and, invoking the "father of modern policing" Sir Robert Peel, suggested that a national Canadian College of Policing would facilitate "policing experts from every province" who ought to "work together and determine the best training for these important servants of society" in order to regain lost trust (Lilley, 2020). A year later, the coalition project seemingly became part of a nation-wide conversation about the politics of policing, framed by concerns about police brutality against Black and Indigenous youth and the mishandling of calls-for-service involving mental health issues (White, 2021).

The comparative literature finds evidence that national context plays a more important role than the specifics of education and training in shaping policing style (Bjørgo & Damen, 2020). In other words, police training and education tends to reflect already existing characteristics and patterns in different countries, not alter them, so there is ample reason to be skeptical regarding its transformative potential in Canada. However, after successfully hosting two virtual conference events — one in June of 2022 and a second in October of the same year — the Coalition for Canadian Police Reform (CCPR) gathered considerable momentum, and the common cause of promoting the idea of a national policing college developed a consensus rationale. It attracted the support of many politicians, academics, and civil society

actors, as well as serving and former police officers. On the face of it, the CCPR Board of Directors is diverse, multicultural, representative of liberal Canadian values, and pragmatic (CCPR, undated No. 2).

Rather than debating the presumed benefits of enhanced training and education in transforming the practices of policing, I argue that, while proposals for improvements (possibly leading up to a Canadian College of Policing) might create an appearance of success in democratic police reform, it will likely fail to address the current authoritarian drift common to the declining post-democracies in the West and could in fact become part of that process (Crouch, 2020; Potter, 2021; Sheptycki, 2022). Across Canada, academics and activists are facing difficulties bringing the police to account (Kwon, Laming & Mukherjee, 2022). In order to successfully do so, we need to improve our public understanding of the web of policing in Canada and its consequences (Brodeur, 2010).

The Problem

Part of the difficulty in public discourse on policing generally — whether in the mass media, on social media, or even in the criminology classroom — is the lack of a clear definition of what constitutes the domain of police professionalism. Decades of research and scholarship have refined a definition of the professional police *métier* (Bowling et al., 2019). They are 'the fire it takes to fight fire' and a 24/7 emergency service. Their special expert professional knowledge concerns how to organize and apply an extensive surveillance and intelligence capacity, backed up with the ability to apply force (including fatal force) so as to maintain the existing social order, make crime into an institutional fact for the criminal justice system, manage institutional risks, and govern insecurity so that conditions remain conducive for existing relations of social power. Society is an amalgam of overlapping, interlocking networks of social power. In a society where there is widespread agreement about social order and what constitutes crime, risk, and insecurity, the politics of the police are that of moral consensus. Yet even under such conditions policing is a 'tainted occupation', it is 'dirty work', and the key to its legitimacy is the infrequency its professional powers are called upon. As their very existence shows that *civil* society does not contain within it all the means of its survival, the moral ambiguity attached to the po-

lice *métier* ensures the occupation is inevitably stigmatized (Brodeur, 2010; Dick, 2005).

The growing problem is that the moral economy in which the practices of the police *métier* are enacted is manifestly not one of consensus. Moral economy is here understood to be "the production, distribution, circulation and use of moral sentiments, emotions, and values, norms and obligations in social space" (Fassin, 2013, p. 263). Crime, risk, insecurity, and social order (and the politics of democratic policing generally) have come to conjure up moral sentiments, values, norms, and obligations that are hotly contested. Up until recently, this was increasingly the case in Europe and North America due to the pernicious effects of global neoliberalism, and it remains to be seen if de-globalization and the new war economy will continue the trends (Reiner, 2017). World history entered a new phase during the "pandemic panic" caused by the initial eruption of COVID-19 as an endemic disease (Sheptycki, 2020). Subsequently, growing war, pestilence, floods, wildfires, cataclysmic weather events, population unrest, political-economic class exclusion, and international mass migration turned up the temperature on the politics of policing. Evidence confirmed a worldwide trend toward "autocratization" (Boese et al., 2022). Policing, not only in Canada but in the other countries of the OECD and the G7, is now being carried out on the foundations of the "hollowing out of the state" characteristic of the transnational neoliberal order that established itself in the 1990s (Sheptycki, 1995). The hollowing out of state capacity to deliver healthcare, education, social welfare, and (in some places) even public amenities, such as potable water, provide the conditions under which policing power is presently put into practice, undermining its democratic legitimacy, perhaps fatally.

The Policing Web and Accountability

Often civilian outsiders do not understand the complexity of the policing web (Brodeur, 2010, p. 101). In his 2018 book *Excessive Force*, Alok Mukherjee, chair of the Toronto Police Services Board for more than a decade (2004–2015) relates the G20 events in Toronto in June of 2010 and his sudden realization, after the police operation went live and the action on the ground was already unfolding, that Chief Bill Blair was not, in fact, actually part of the operational

command structure (Mukherjee and Harper, 2018, p. 57). From inside the state-of-the-art military-style operational command centre on the tenth floor of Toronto Police Headquarters while the action was underway, Dr. Mukherjee was in a position to observe something of the complexity, organizational chaos, and awesome power of networked policing in Canada. His account revealed that negotiated policies between the Toronto Police Services Board (TPSB) and the Toronto Police Service (TPS) governing officers' conduct were covertly superseded by operational arrangements facilitating the interorganizational and multi-agency police network working the streets of Toronto. His record of those events raised a number of questions (Mukherjee and Harper, 2018) pp. 43-65). How can the contrary principles of national security and community safety in networked policing be democratically reconciled? How will securitization and militarization affect local policing? Given the enhanced technical capacities of police surveillance, how can citizen rights be ensured? Given all of these difficult political issues, how do police agencies maintain public trust? Ultimately, can networked policing in Canada become democratically accountable? (Mukherjee and Harper, 2018, pp. 64-65).

Roughly 80% of Canadian policing is delivered by municipal police services held to account by municipal authorities and paid for with municipal tax dollars, and this is where the focus on the politics of the police in Canada has historically been (Sewell, 2010; Sewell & Williams, 2021). But the policing web in Canada has always been more than 'Big City Police' (Marquis, 2012). It obviously also includes the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA), and the various provincial police bodies like the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) and the *Sûreté du Québec*, but it also includes a variety of high policing organizations such as CISC, CSIS, and the CSE. At the edges, networked policing in Canada encompasses the domain of private security actors at the local level, the privatized activities of public police services, and the military and national security agencies (Brodeur, 2010, pp. 309-334; Walby & Lippert, 2015; Lippert & Walby, 2022). The policing web also extends to include transnational private high policing and corporate security (O'Reilly, 2010; 2015). Formal and informal relations across these multiple networks allow for interaction within and across domestic jurisdictions and at the transnational level (Lemieux, 2010).

Police organizations are linked with each other in a myriad of ways for many different operational reasons in an extended and complex web that has more than one centre and is simultaneously both local and also potentially transnational, and it is essentially democratically unaccountable (Bowling & Sheptycki, 2012; Bowling et al., 2019, p. 145 & p. 185; Council of Canadians, 2014; Lister & Rowe, 2016). Indeed, the relevant research literature suggests the practical "impossibility of the task of bringing all aspects of policing under the strict rule of law" (Brodeur, 2010, p. 132).

Theoretically speaking, there is a transnational policing web, but this web is not uniform, it is not centrally managed or controlled, and it is not without internal conflicts, inconsistencies, contradictions, and institutional friction. It is not a police 'sector', or 'industry', or 'complex', but rather a complicated 'web' of institutionalized ideas and practices exclusive to the police *métier*. In "relatively consensual democracies" there is a "circle of policing appearances" whereby the police "constitute the self-accomplishment of security" (Brodeur, 2010, pp. 174–179), but what happens if the assumption of consent and compliance no longer holds? Granted, it is extraordinarily difficult for theorists on the outside to think clearly through the tangled web of representations and ideas about policing and it is not necessarily easy for social scientists interested in the politics of the police to collectively cultivate the power to "make things true" and "restructure and change the relations of dominance and subordination" in the interests of social justice (cf. Brock, et al., 2014, esp. pps. 13; 51). There is empirical research that maps the internal police division of labour and describes how operational and digital information flows (both formally and informally) within these networks (Sanders & Sheptycki, 2017; Sheptycki, 2017; 2017b). This internal mapping is important because research mapping the complexity of police civilian oversight mechanisms reveals their limited jurisdictional penetration into these organizations (Bennett Moses, 2022; Brodeur, 2010, p. 247-51; Bowling et al., 2019, pp. 231-233; Giacomantonio, 2015; Lister & Rowe, 2016). So, at the very least, the democratic lacuna at the heart of the Western police and security apparatus has been revealed. At the time of writing, Canadians were learning something about the machinations of networked policing as a result of the *Emergencies Act* inquiry held in the aftermath of the massive display

of police minimal use-of-force with military precision that ended the occupation of Ottawa by the so-called Freedom Convoy in the winter of 2022 (Lapierre, 2022; Osman, 2022; Tunney, 2022). It is too soon to tell how this has changed the public conversation about the politics of the police in Canada, but the early indications are not necessarily hopeful (Canadian Press, 2022; McLeod & Walsh, 2022)

The Professional Ideology of Policing

The professional ideology of policing in the West presents itself publicly with a veneer of pragmatism, Peelian platitudes, and rule-of-law rhetoric, combined with tropes of pluralism and multiculturalism, but other concepts shape what is considered legitimate knowledge within the logic of the police *métier*. This complex of ideas holds that policing best-practice is evidence based, that operational policing is intelligence led, and that economy, efficiency, and effectiveness is achieved through police management science (Amicelle et al., 2020; Williamson, 2008). The literature encompassing police management science, organization, and administration is enormous and includes many books and specialist academic journals. Claims to professional knowledge have been made since modern policing began and they attained their characteristic ideological shape by the time August Vollmer and O.W. Wilson became professional police reformers in the early twentieth century (Bowling et al., 2019). Proven mastery of professional knowledge is essential for rising to the top of police leadership (Fleming, 2015). Empirical research about what police do and how social science informs their thinking is a pre-condition for engineering organizational accountability (Bowling et al., 2019). Police organizations undertake a huge number of environmental scans, threat assessments, risk analyses, program evaluations, and other internally conducted research studies. This institutional thinking provides the script(s) for interaction with external actors. Sometimes police organizations present limited data or data analysis to the public, or co-operate with friendly outside academics, in an effort to explain and legitimize police operational policies and practices. What are outsiders to make of professional police ideology?

The answer to this question can perhaps best be given by reference to number of archetypal research studies: the Kansas City Preventative Patrol Experiment (1970); the Minneapolis Domestic Violence Ex-

periment (1982); the Baltimore Community Policing Experiment (1989); and the Kansas City Gun Experiment (1992). These studies track the rise of evidence-based policing and provide a condensation of the ideology that was used to dominate thinking, research, and policy concerning police and society by the early twenty-first century (Sherman, 2013). The changing agenda of police research has been more fully narrated elsewhere (Bowling et, al., 2019, pp. 11-15), but it is possible to make some summary points here. Foremost, conducted as field experiments, these studies exemplify the scientificity of police knowledge. Given the police *métier* is concerned with the technical application of the powers of both coercion and surveillance, it is no surprise that these studies in their various ways focus on the surveillance of territory and suspect populations and are concerned with developing metrics that account for the effectiveness of the application of police power. The now classic examples of 'hot spots policing' and 'frequent offender profiling', which are predicated on notions of police crime deterrence and control, are practical manifestations of this ideology. All of the aforementioned studies concerning police and crime reduction have been subject to rigorous methodological critique and come up wanting because the problem is, as a society, we cannot police our way out of social problems (Bowling et al., 2019, p. 115-122). Empirical research has revealed that the objectivity of the evidence base is often overstated and the presumption of political neutrality of strategic decision making in police resource allocation is unwarranted (Gundhus et al., 2018), but it has also revealed how some of these processes could be opened up to more democratic inputs (Rønn, 2012). This may yet turn out to be a significant discovery in view of the conclusion that judicial regulation after the fact is not an effective way of governing policing (Roach, 2022).

Professional police research and training need not be locked into the crime control mode, but its unfulfilled promise as part of the project of peace, order, and good government is largely because it has been (Brunger et al., 2015; Fielding, 2018). There are many ways to illustrate the general point that police research is often locked into control-mode thinking and the resultant (albeit perhaps unintended) paradoxical outcomes. Not surprisingly, given that coercion is an essential feature of the police *métier,* considerable importance has been placed on research concerning police use-of-force (e.g.. Wortley et

al., 2021). "Using minimal force is not merely incidental to the police mandate, but constitutive of it" (Brodeur, 2010, p. 108), and many people find this antinomy difficult to think through (ibid, p. 38-39). Thinking within professional police ideology forwards the view that certain types of training can mitigate, or de-escalate, police use-of-force. However, a systematic review of the literature shows the questionable quality of almost all evaluation research designs focusing on this topic (Engel et al., 2020). Nonetheless, studies on use-of-force training are frequently piloted, results are published, policy options advocated, and, often enough, they are adopted. An indicative study to assess the 'twenty-one-foot rule' — the common North American police standard safe distance for dealing with dangerous suspects — concluded that twenty-one feet was an ineffective distance for officers to draw and fire their weapon at a charging assailant and that a more reasonable distance would be thirty-two feet. This study ostensibly aimed to enhance both officer and suspect safety, and suggested the need for further research on the importance of muscle memory to enhance dynamic movement, which might be preferable to the traditional static shooting positions officers are typically trained in (Sandel et al., 2020). The international comparative literature reveals that the non-rational and emotional features of much situational policework entail that the psychological ingredients of many incidents can push legal and regulatory considerations about the use of coercive force into the background (Stenning et al., 2009, p. 105). Surveying the voluminous literature over the past few decades on the precise calibration of coercion for police use-of-force, one is struck by the fact that de-escalation models can quite easily be read in reverse as escalation models. Since the variety of police use-of-force options has increased over the same period, it would seem that, regardless of any claims made about the intentions of training in this regard, if anything the overall effect has been to increase its presumptive importance in the routine performance of the police *métier*.

The top scientific police administrators undertake systematic surveillance of both police resources and the external environment in which police organizations operate in order to rationally allocate resources, decide "what works" in policing, and which practices, tactics, and strategies accomplish police missions most cost effectively (Sherman,

2013, p. 377). It is upon monopoly claims to knowledge relevant to the police *métier* that their credibility lays.

The UK College of Policing

Police knowledge claims gain persuasive force through amplification by institutions of research, training, and education. The Coalition for Canadian Police Reform calls for the establishment of a national Canadian College of Policing with the aim of providing a central locus for the professionalization of police training, education, and standards. The proposed college has been analogized to that of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons, as if this is self-evidently the best institutional model of governance for ensuring public health and that professional medicine and health policy are above economics and politics. Leaving these questions to the medical sociologists (e.g., Cockerham, 2016), the more applicable comparison is with the UK College of Policing that was established in 2012, which members of the CCPR also cite with enthusiasm. It is important to know that the UK College of Policing was established during a period of government austerity and neoliberal hollowing out of the state that, empirical research shows, resulted in a dramatic and uncoordinated reduction in police service (Ellison & Brogden, 2012).

The organization of police professional education allows for various actors to assume greater public presence, push reformist agendas, and enhance their status through association with specialized forms of knowledge (Williams & Cockroft, 2019, p. 134). Subsequent knowledge wars between different consuming interests working in the market for police and security services have seemingly insured the inevitability and utility of the core tenants of so-called scientific evidence-based police thinking (Martin, 2019, p. 199).

When the UK College of Policing was established with great fanfare, the promise was that it would improve the quality of police training, recruitment, and education and, as a result, address the problems of waning police legitimacy in the United Kingdom. The forced resignation of London Metropolitan Police Commissioner Cressida Dick in February 2022 amidst deepening scandals over racism, sexism, ineffectiveness, malfeasance, and continuing corruption offers practical evidence of the failure of the College of Policing to deliver on its

promise, despite the volume of studies and programs it has produced over the years (Dodd, 2022; College of Policing UK; HMICFRS, 2021). A decade after its establishment, in a *Fundamental Review of the College of Policing* (College of Policing, 2022), it was observed that the "College is not seen as a credible voice by many," "is not widely recognised as a centre of expertise," and that "there is a perception that the College is not as well connected to contemporary policing as it should be" (p. 15). Further, this report suggested that many in policing, both at the level of rank-and-file and senior command, were disengaged and saw the College as a poor communicator (p. 17).

Nonetheless, the UK College of Policing occupies a strategic location in the global policing web and is powerful for all that. For example, it was put on the defensive in 2017 after the significant income stream for international training programs in authoritarian countries with bad human rights records was revealed through a Freedom of Information request made by social justice campaigners (Amin, 2017; College of Policing, 2022, p. 44, 57). Legions of "professors for police" (Seigel, 2018, p. 121) travel the world legitimizing state violence while attempting to preserve the idea of state benevolence and the UK College of Policing is part of that network. The literature reveals diverse views about the extent to which international police training programs facilitate global descent toward authoritarianism or uphold human rights (Bayer, 2015; Ellison & Pino, 2012; Easton & den Boer, 2010; Goldsmith & Sheptycki, 2007; Kitossa, 2012; Madsen, 2020). According to Netpol — a coalition of campaigners, legal support groups, lawyers, and academics monitoring policing in the UK — the UK College of Policing had an "outsized influence" (Weitzberg, 2022, p. 25) in the furthering the adoption of artificial intelligence and facial-recognition technology in police services. The globalization of the evidence-based policing ideology is advanced through the UK College of Policing and institutions like it (Piza & Welsh, 2022). The network of police colleges for training and education in Canada is as complex and ultimately democratically unaccountable as the network of police agencies it serves. Its consolidation into a Canadian College of Policing along the lines of the one in the UK would, in effect, create a powerful institutional node in the

global policing web sitting at the national apex of networked policing in Canada.

The best that police education can do is to create the conditions for full democratic participation where officers are, to lean on a Peelian principle, *mere* citizens in uniform. Knowledge exclusive to the police *métier* tends to dominate thinking in training institutions while the really crucial variables to consider lie in the vicissitudes of the moral and political economy in which police practice is enacted. Consolidation of professional knowledge in a citadel such as the proposed Canadian College of Policing is a bad idea, especially in a time when many academics are calling for research ethics boards to put an end to "the practice of legitimizing police and corporate-funded research by attaching their [university] scholarly credentials to it" (Hannem & Schneider, 2020).

The Bigger Picture

Debates about the politics of the police in Canada are highly polarized. Institutional insiders are all in agreement that fundamental change is necessary, but cannot agree on precisely what it is or how to achieve it. Outsiders are often full of misapprehensions about policing fostered by misunderstandings cultivated in a media environment where truthful information and communication are sacrificed on the ideological alter of entertainment and advertising revenue (Bowling et al., 2019; Doyle, 2003; Schneider, 2016). Furthermore, feelings of fear and insecurity now pollute the atmosphere of debate while conditions in the neoliberal university of the present channel social-science thinking (including thinking about crime and policing) into a few safe topics calculated for success in obtaining research grants, promotion, and job security (Winlow, 2022). The situation is inimical to public criminology even at the elite level (Loader & Sparks, 2011).

Enlightenment ideas born in the eighteenth century about democracy, politics, and law that were turbo-charged by two centuries of industrialism and colonialism fuelled by hydrocarbons have now born their fruit. According to the Canadian philosopher Andrew Potter (2021), Western civilization has entered a "relentless secular decline" that is "masked by what looks to be progress" (p. 17). According to him, the economic, political, demographic, environmental, political, and cul-

tural foundations of our civilization are under enormous stress and a declining path. Decline is not extinction and "the only question is what happens next" (Potter, 2021, p. 118). In the so-called post-Ferguson era, police-reform agendas rapidly emerged to grapple with institutions profoundly shaped by this decay (Deuchar et al., 2021).

Years ago, political and historical sociologists debated the extent to which the international state system had been reconfigured by the transnational capitalist class (Sklair, 2000; Mann, 1997). Now political scientist Colin Crouch (2020) argues that we have entered the phase of 'post-democracy' and that behind the façade of our public institutions Western democracy has been hollowed out. In this situation the big events such as elections have become empty rituals because power has passed to transnational circles of wealthy business elites and an ever more isolated political class. Behind the black mirror that screens public debate, a number of connected individuals, organizations, and institutions target masses of people creating the illusion of genuine debate and discussion on issues of vital interest. According to him, across many countries of the West, social exclusion caused by neoliberal policies has nurtured xenophobia and populism and, stoked by an ideology of pessimistic nostalgia, has given rise to a mood of hatred and violence. These big macro historical trends fundamentally affect the possibilities for democratic police legitimacy.

A research group at the University of Bremen is exploring the emergence of soft authoritarianisms in Western countries (University of Bremen, n.d.). The concept appears to be contradictory but it aims to capture the fuzziness of the situation as democracies slide into authoritarian rule. Among other things, they directly challenge the powerful anti-Semitic myth of an all-powerful global elite conspiratorially pulling the strings in the background. At the same time they draw attention to the fluid and flexible political, juridical, social, and discursive configurations that blur the line between democratic and authoritarian practices of rule occurring transnationally in various Western countries. They particularly observe the necropolitics of policing mass migration on the frontiers of European civilization. In the presently existing moral economy, human rights erode and authoritarian policing increasingly looks like an appropriate solution to insecu-

rity (Bowling & Sheptycki, 2016). All the while, the politics of racial identity greatly affect political debate concerning policing in Europe and North America (Cole, 2022; Elliot-Cooper, 2021; Vitale, 2017). Concurrently, in the US, there is significant evidence of right-wing infiltration of law enforcement institutions (Brennan Center for Justice, 2020). In Canada, there is an urgent need to explore the set of meanings underlying the "most misguided metaphor to represent the police" (Brodeur, 2010, p. 179) after controversial thin-blue-line patches were informally adopted by some officers as part of their police uniforms beginning in 2020 (Baker, 2022).

Members of a technocratic elite occupying the commanding positions in police institutional networks are collectively significant political players globally and locally (Sheptycki, 2019). By following their ideology of police professionalism, our thinking falls into the 'law-and-order trap' and attention is deflected from thinking about broader political-economic transformations to the social context of policing (Reiner, 2020). The ideology of the police *métier* is foreign to outsiders, but if the fundamental condition of democratic policing by consent requires that the general public both understands and endorses the police mission, then the mission for higher education about policing and society should focus on the citizenry, including, but not limited to, those in uniform. This is because, in the present, a generally uncomprehending public experiences a police presence many often do not endorse, while those in police service are alienated from both their occupation and from the public on whose authority they ultimately act (Sheptycki, 2022b). The founding of a Canadian College of Policing may or may not come to pass. Regardless, any such institution could not deliver on any promises to overcome the problems of democratic police legitimacy, much less create the conditions of social justice and peace.

Conclusion

In Canada, independent academic research on policing has been limited and has been largely confined to the side-lines leaving police organizations to evolve along with the technologies of surveillance and coercion (Griffiths, 2014; Haggerty, 2004; PWC, 2018). The best that can be hoped for is that the CCPR provokes a conversation that stalls further authoritarian drift and thereby sends an important inter-

national signal. The worst that can be feared is that the purported liberal intentions of progressive police reformers consolidate an institution that later is shown to be repressive and anti-social.

The year 2022 drew to a close presenting reasons not to expect the best. Rank-and-file across Canada confronted a possibly alarming barometric indicator of the febrile moral economy in which they work after five police officers were killed in the line of duty in four separate incidents late in the year (Swadden, 2022). Constable Andrew Hong of the Toronto Police Service was ambushed and fatally shot in a coffee shop on September 12, 2022 by a shooter who then went on a violent rampage killing and injuring many others. Constables Morgan Russell and Devon Northrup of the South Simcoe Police Service died in hospital on October 11, 2022 after being shot attending a reported domestic disturbance. RCMP Constable Shealyn Yang was stabbed to death on October 18, 2022 while working with a mental health outreach team in an encampment of homeless people in Burnaby, BC. Constable Grzegorz Pierzchala of the Ontario Provincial Police was shot and killed on December 27, 2022 while responding to a call about a vehicle stuck in a ditch on a rural road. This rash of incidents again raised concerns about democratic policing by consent, bringing to mind some words from Jean-Paul Brodeur (2010, p. 350):

> The most ominous sign of the failure of the policing apparatus is when, first, it encounters systematic armed resistance, and second, the police are attacked in the context of an offensive against them, rather than a defensive move by criminals wanting to avoid being arrested. In this second sense of the expression, the consent of the community to be policed is the sine qua non condition of policing.

For those convinced by the language of evidence-based, intelligence-led, administrative science, the perception that the problems of democratic legitimacy can be solved by increasing police professionalism remains the only one plausible. The essential danger is that this continues to be the limiting mainstream policy view in Canada while the distinctive voices of other public intellectuals get lost in mixed meanings and collectively become ‘democratic undertakers’ as the drift towards authoritarianism in the international system continues to

shape local policing unabated (cf. Loader & Sparks, 2011 p. 144). Only time will tell what emerges out of the consuming interests involved in the production, distribution, circulation, and use of moral sentiments, emotions, and values, norms, and obligations surrounding the police in Canada and if democratic policing by consent has been lost.

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