

**ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE AND SYSTEMIC SEXUAL MISCONDUCT:
A CRITICAL ANALYSIS**

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Abstract

This study offers a comprehensive examination of the systemic nature of sexual misconduct within the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), a national law enforcement agency with a long history of service and public trust. Through a multi-method approach that includes legal case analyses, testimonies in reports and media accounts, and a critical review of relevant policies, this research investigates how the RCMP's institutional culture has perpetuated a toxic environment for women officers. Central to this study is the exploration of the role of hypermasculine ideals, which have shaped the organization's practices, creating a culture that tolerates and even enables sexual harassment and misconduct. The analysis highlights persistent patterns of institutional silence, retaliation against those who speak out, and the marginalization of female voices within the organization, all of which contribute to the failure to address the widespread problem of harassment. Despite legal action, including multiple lawsuits and class-action cases, as well as public scrutiny, the study finds that significant cultural and structural barriers remain entrenched in the RCMP. These barriers continue to impede meaningful progress toward achieving gender equity and a safe working environment for all officers. While policy changes have been implemented in response to public outcry, they have proven insufficient in dismantling the entrenched power dynamics that protect perpetrators and silence victims. The research also examines the role of organizational leadership, identifying the ways in which insufficient accountability and lack of independent oversight contribute to the persistence of harassment within the RCMP.

Drawing from feminist criminology, intersectional theory, and institutional power frameworks, this dissertation offers a critical perspective on the complexities of gendered violence

in law enforcement. The study underscores the need for comprehensive institutional reform, including the establishment of stronger accountability mechanisms, independent oversight bodies, and better support systems for victims of harassment. By contributing to ongoing discussions about workplace harassment and law enforcement reform, this research provides both theoretical insights and practical recommendations for addressing the pervasive culture of sexual misconduct within the RCMP and similar law enforcement agencies across Canada.

Keywords: RCMP, sexual misconduct, law enforcement, hypermasculinity, institutional reform, gender equity, accountability, harassment, power dynamics, organizational culture.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background and Context

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) holds a significant place in Canadian society as a symbol of law, order, and national unity. Parliament passed an act that allowed for the creation of the North-West Mounted Police (NWMP) on May 23, 1873 (<https://rcmp.ca/en/history-rcmp/rcmp-origin-story>). Established in 1873, the NWMP was originally tasked with maintaining peace across Canada's western frontier. In 1904, King Edward VII awarded the title of Royal to the North-West Mounted Police, officially creating the Royal North-West Mounted Police (ibid). Legislation in 1920 changed the Royal North-West Mounted Police name to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Over the years, the RCMP has expanded its role, becoming national police force responsible for federal, provincial, and municipal law enforcement.

History of Women in Police Services

In the early years of Canadian policing, women's work in policing was an extension of their traditional domestic roles. The positions of matrons, social workers, and guardians of children, protection of morals or clerical workers (Berg and Biednick, 1986; Lord, 1986) kept women "in their place". In North America, or more specifically New York, women were first associated with police departments as prison matrons who performed custodial rather than police-oriented duties in 1845. The earliest recorded appointment of women in policing was in Chicago in 1893, where the officer assigned court visitations and assisted male detectives in cases involving women and children (Bell, 1982). The next appointment occurred in Portland Oregon in 1905. However, as

Bell notes, it was 1910 in Los Angeles before an officially classified "policewoman" was appointed to supervise and enforce the law in dance halls and theatres, and to locate missing persons. Throughout the decades, women for the most part were allowed to act as social workers, clerks and prison matrons. It was not until 1968 that a major department in Indianapolis assigned women to patrol duties. By 1971, there were fewer than a dozen women patrol officers throughout the United States.

Similarly in Canada, the first woman was hired in 1912 by the Vancouver Police Department, followed by Toronto in 1913, Winnipeg in 1917 and Edmonton in 1919 (Linden,1982). These women were not issued uniforms nor trained in policing but employed as prison custodians. In 1887 the Toronto Police Department hired Mrs. Whiddon as a Police Matron whose responsibilities was to respond promptly to calls, search women who had been arrested, and attend to them while they awaited court appearances (Toronto Police Services, 2008). It was not until 1913 that Mary Minty and Maria Levitt became Toronto's first policewomen. Along with dealing with female prisoners, they supervised dance halls ("where their visitations have a good moral effect") and handled the regulation of fortune tellers (ibid). After the original policewomen retired in 1919, three more were hired. In 1921, another two were appointed. They were assigned more and more responsibilities gradually. By 1933, policewomen were an integral part of the Morality Bureau, participating in under-cover investigations. When the Women's Bureau and the Youth Bureau were established in 1958, they were staffed almost entirely by female officers, and were instrumental in allowing women to gain experience and demonstrate their competence.

The fight for equality in the service has been steady, if slow. In 1945, the pay scale finally became the same for women as it was for men. In that year women adopted the proper blue uniforms, and the range of duties became more far-reaching. Women did not ride in patrol cars

until 1959. In 1960, policewomen changed their hats to the derby style, after being mistaken for stewardesses and transit guides. Until 1972, a policewoman who had a baby had to resign. It was only in 1974 that policewomen were even armed for the first time - carrying their revolvers in specially designed handbags. Today, women serve in every facet of policing, and in the most senior positions. From the days when a handful of officers made up the female contingent, there are now over 600 female officers, over 12% of the total. Women also comprise more than half of civilian staff. It has been a long, interesting and rewarding ride since the days of Mrs. Whiddon (ibid).

In the 1890s, the RCMP employed women as matrons and jailers to deal with female offenders or to be part of an escort when female prisoners were moved from one place to another. In 1973, women were assigned general patrol duties. The RCMP had employed women as civilian members, still with no police powers nor uniform. By the 1970's women were graduating as RCMP officers. One of these women was Katherine Ryan (also known as Klondike Kate), was hired on February 5, 1900 at the Whitehorse Detachment in the Northwest Territories to assist the North-West Mounted Police with the care of female prisoners. She was the first woman hired by the RCMP as a special constable. In the early 1900s, women were hired as fingerprint and lab technicians. In 1946, Dr. Frances McGill, often referred to as the first woman Mountie, was appointed as the Force's first honorary surgeon (RCMP, 2025). Between 1922 and 1942, she was director of the Saskatchewan forensic identification lab and was associated with the Force for many years in the fields of medical science, forensic medicine and pathology.

Throughout the force's history, the spouses of police officers also performed a range of duties to support operations in one- and two-man isolated posts. Their duties ranged from answering phones and taking complaints to searching female offenders and providing meals to prisoners, as well as providing lodging and meals to visiting officials. On May 23, 1974,

Commissioner M.J. Nadon announced that the RCMP would begin accepting applications from women for regular police duties. Recruited from across the country, the first troop of 32 female police officers, Troop 17, arrived at Depot (the training academy), in Regina Saskatchewan, on September 18 and 19, 1974 to begin training, graduating on March 3, 1975. On September 16, 1974, 32 women across Canada simultaneously took the oath to become police officers, fundamentally changing the Royal Canadian Mounted Police forever. Today, approximately one fifth of the RCMP's police officers (also known as regular members) are women, with more and more women in the senior ranks (inspector and above). The RCMP's first female commissioner was Bev Busson, who took the helm of the force in 2006 (ibid). The increase in women's representation in policing was primarily due to human rights legislation.

Interestingly, Appier (1998:1) details how policewomen "redefine police work as a job a woman could do as well as, if not better than, a man". Moreover, women's entry into police work affected the discourse and direction of police reform, especially in terms of how policewomen and their supporters contested male hegemony in police work, and how the police incorporated gender into its operations and organization (ibid, 2). Appier further notes that women were recruited to police services to "enforce vice laws, identify bad social conditions, and steer individual teenage girls and young women away from moral dangers" (ibid, 40). Appier attributes a good part of the "blame" for the defeats policewomen suffered during the 1930s to the second generation of policewomen, whom she characterizes as "both unable and unwilling to follow the lead of the pioneering generation" (ibid, 165). She notes that although the second generation of female officers sought assimilation into the male police organization by wearing uniforms, carrying guns, and distancing themselves from social work, they were never accepted as policemen's equals.

As Martin (1980:20) argues, the reason for the sex-related role of policing is associated with "the use of authority in potentially violent situations in which males, by virtue of their physical stature, socialization and society's assumptions about them, are at an advantage.

The early history of policing in Canada, like that of many other countries, was overwhelmingly male-dominated. Women were largely excluded from mainstream police work, and their roles were confined to more "appropriate" duties associated with social work, such as child welfare and family disputes (Barrie, 2018). Policing was designed with strict gender norms in mind, positioning women outside of traditional law enforcement duties, which were believed to require physical strength, aggression, and decisiveness traits traditionally associated with masculinity (Baker, 2016). In fact, early criminological studies reveal that women in law enforcement were rarely viewed as competent for the more high-risk, frontline tasks typically assigned to male officers (Harris & Kory, 2018). This gendered division reinforced the belief that policing was inherently unsuitable for women.

The formal integration of women into the RCMP began in 1974, decades after female officers had been incorporated into other municipal and provincial police forces across Canada. While this was seen as a progressive step, it was also met with significant resistance from within the institution. Early female recruits faced severe discrimination, often being relegated to lower-profile assignments and enduring hostile working environments. As noted by Loughlin (2017), the early years of female integration were marked by verbal abuse, physical harassment, and a general reluctance from male officers to accept female colleagues as equals.

Furthermore, even after formal integration, women in the RCMP faced systemic exclusion from leadership roles. Despite various affirmative action policies aimed at promoting gender diversity within the force, women continue to be significantly underrepresented in senior positions.

As of 2020, women accounted for only 21% of sworn officers in the RCMP, with even fewer advancing into leadership roles (Meyer, 2019). Studies have shown that women who do manage to ascend within the ranks often encounter more intense scrutiny and face biases that hinder their career progression (Clayton, 2018). This institutional gender inequality is compounded by the overarching hypermasculine culture that persists in the RCMP.

In their study of women in police work, Wells and Alt (2005) focus on the numerous challenges faced by women who chose law enforcement as a career. Clearly, women have been involved in various forms of policing for the last 100 years, but it was not until the Equal Employment Act of 1970 that women could move from the job of meter maids to patrol and detective work. Yet less than 1% of all top-level cops are women, and there remain significant obstacles in the career paths of women in the force. Their study examines the history of women police officers and provides first-hand accounts of women at every level, including those who drop out. It addresses discrimination, competition, lack of mentoring, differential treatment, and sexual harassment. Interestingly, Alt and Wells (ibid) describe how women have changed police work into a more community-oriented model of policing, reduced police violence, served as a strong force to promote a more effective response to domestic violence within police departments, and helped with community-police relations.

Challenges for Women Officers

For many Canadians, the RCMP is an iconic representation of justice and the nation's values of fairness and service to the public. However, this image of the RCMP as a noble institution has been overshadowed by an ongoing history of systemic sexual misconduct, harassment, and gender-based violence against female officers. Since the RCMP formally began integrating women officers in the 1970s, their presence has been marred by persistent allegations of sexual harassment

and discrimination. Scholars such as Bourne (2010) argue that the RCMP's work culture is entrenched in traditional masculine norms, which perpetuate gender-based violence and harassment. This culture of hypermasculinity prioritizes toughness and dominance, which is reinforced through institutional practices that have made it difficult for female officers to report misconduct or seek justice. The RCMP has historically overlooked the needs and safety of women, often trivializing their experiences or, worse, subjecting them to retaliation for speaking out (DeMarco, 2020).

The landmark cases Merlo-Davidson v. Canada (RCMP) (2019), Merlo and Davidson v. Her Majesty the Queen, Federal Court Action Number T-1685-16.

In *Merlo v Canada, 2017 FC 533* a former female officers brought forward class-action lawsuits alleging sexual harassment and systemic discrimination, brought significant public attention to the issue. Despite legal settlements, institutional culture has largely remained resistant to change, with women still reporting ongoing harassment and systemic retaliation. The RCMP's failure to acknowledge and rectify this entrenched misconduct raises critical questions about its commitment to gender equality and the safety of its officers.

Succinctly, this dissertation aims to provide an in-depth examination of the systemic nature of sexual misconduct within the RCMP. The focus is on understanding how hypermasculine culture, institutional power dynamics, and insufficient policy enforcement contribute to a toxic environment for female officers. Drawing from legal cases, survivor testimonies, and media reports, this study explores the intersection of gender, power, and institutional culture, and the ways in which these elements enable sexual harassment to thrive within the force. The study focusses on the following specific questions:

i. How does the hypermasculine culture within the RCMP contribute to the normalization of sexual harassment?

ii. What are the structural factors that allow sexual misconduct to persist in the RCMP despite legal action and public scrutiny?

iii. How do institutional power dynamics suppress the voices of female officers and protect perpetrators of sexual misconduct?

iv. What reforms can be implemented to ensure a safer, more inclusive work environment for women in the RCMP?

The primary purpose of this research is to critically analyze the systemic issue of sexual misconduct within the RCMP. The study will investigate how institutionalized practices, organizational culture, and structural inequalities contribute to the marginalization of women officers. Furthermore, this inquiry will evaluate the effectiveness of policy reforms aimed at addressing gender-based violence in the RCMP and offer recommendations for meaningful institutional change.

The research also seeks to examine the experiences of women who have faced harassment in the RCMP and to offer insights into how law enforcement agencies, in general, can foster a culture of respect, inclusivity, and gender equity. By analyzing existing legal cases, testimonies, and institutional responses, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issue and contribute to the ongoing discussion surrounding gender-based violence in law enforcement.

Sexual harassment and gender inequality in law enforcement agencies have been subjects of growing scholarly interest over the past few decades. Studies by scholars such as Corsianos (1999), Orban (2005), Bourne (2010), Couto and Visano (2012), and Brubaker (2017) have highlighted

how policing cultures that emphasize masculinity and toughness contribute to an environment that tolerates or even encourages sexual misconduct. However, much of the existing research has focused on municipal police services especially in the United States generally and Toronto specifically, with relatively little attention given to the RCMP specifically.

While studies on policing culture and sexual harassment in other Canadian police forces (Ontario Provincial Police, Toronto and Montreal Police Services) have revealed patterns of misconduct, the RCMP's unique historical role in Canadian society requires a distinct analysis. The RCMP is not only a law enforcement agency but also a deeply embedded national symbol, which complicates efforts to critically examine its internal culture. The few studies that do focus on the RCMP, such as the work of DeMarco (2020) and King (2019), are primarily centered on legal case studies rather than a broader institutional analysis. This dissertation seeks to fill this gap by combining legal analysis, feminist criminology, and institutional theory to provide a holistic understanding of sexual misconduct within the RCMP.

This study draws on feminist criminology, intersectionality, and institutional power theories to frame its analysis. Feminist criminology provides the necessary tools to understand how gender, power, and patriarchy operate within law enforcement, particularly in relation to sexual violence. The work of feminist scholars like Martin (2016) and DeKeseredy (2017) on gender-based violence in policing will guide the study's approach to understanding the experiences of female officers.

Additionally, the theory of intersectionality, as articulated by Crenshaw (1991), will be employed to explore how race, sexuality, and class intersect with gender in the experiences of female officers. Intersectionality allows for a nuanced understanding of how women in the RCMP, especially racialized and Indigenous women, experience harassment and discrimination differently

from their white counterparts. Finally, institutional power theories, particularly the work of Foucault (1977), will help explain how power dynamics within the RCMP prevent meaningful change and protect perpetrators from accountability.

This dissertation employs a qualitative research methodology, which is well-suited to studying complex social phenomena such as institutional cultures and gendered violence. The methods are consistent with and derivative of interpretive approaches, notably, hermeneutics and critical content analysis. The research will primarily use case study analysis to explore key legal battles, including the Merlo-Davidson lawsuit, and to analyze how legal decisions have shaped the public discourse around sexual misconduct in the RCMP. In addition to legal case studies, media coverage and public testimonies were studied to understand how sexual misconduct in the RCMP has been portrayed and discussed in Canadian society.

This dissertation makes a significant contribution to the academic discourse on sexual misconduct in law enforcement by offering a focused and critical examination of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). By investigating the unique organizational culture, historical context, and institutional dynamics of the RCMP, this research provides a deeper understanding of how systemic sexual harassment has been perpetuated within this well-respected national institution. While much of the existing scholarship has explored sexual misconduct in policing in general, this study offers a nuanced examination of the RCMP, an institution that holds a unique and highly symbolic position within Canadian society. The RCMP is not just a law enforcement agency, but a deeply embedded national symbol, often portrayed as the embodiment of Canadian values such as justice, loyalty, and service. This cultural significance makes the issue of sexual misconduct within the RCMP even more pressing, as it challenges the very ideals the institution represents. A key aspect of this dissertation is its theoretical integration of feminist criminology,

intersectionality, and institutional theory. Feminist criminology provides the tools to critically assess how patriarchal power structures within the RCMP reinforce gendered violence and harassment. Scholars like Martin (2016) and DeKeseredy (2017) have long argued that law enforcement agencies, including the RCMP, operate within a system that is shaped by masculinist norms, where women's voices are marginalized, and their experiences are often trivialized or ignored. Through a feminist lens, this dissertation explores the ways in which these patriarchal norms become institutionalized and contribute to a culture that tolerates sexual harassment.

In addition, this dissertation applies intersectionality, a concept first developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991), to understand how race, class, and other social identities intersect with gender in shaping the experiences of women in the RCMP. Intersectional theory provides a more nuanced understanding of how sexual harassment manifests differently for racialized and Indigenous women, who often face compounded forms of discrimination within the RCMP's predominantly white, male-dominated culture. The intersectional lens not only expands the scope of the research but also ensures that the experiences of marginalized groups are adequately represented, providing a more inclusive analysis of sexual misconduct in law enforcement.

Moreover, institutional theory, particularly the ideas developed by Michel Foucault (1977), offers valuable insights into how power structures within the RCMP maintain the status quo and prevent meaningful change. Foucault's concepts of discipline, surveillance, and power relations provide a framework for understanding how institutional structures can act as mechanisms of control that protect perpetrators of sexual misconduct while silencing victims. This theoretical approach helps explain the persistence of sexual harassment within the RCMP despite legal settlements and public outcry. By analyzing the institutional mechanisms that allow perpetrators

to operate with impunity, the dissertation reveals the deeper systemic problems that hinder genuine reform within the force.

This study not only addresses the theoretical aspects of sexual misconduct in law enforcement but also provides concrete recommendations for institutional reform. These recommendations are grounded in the findings of the research and are designed to address the root causes of sexual harassment and gender inequality within the RCMP. For example, the dissertation proposes the establishment of independent oversight bodies to investigate allegations of misconduct, more robust training programs focused on gender equity and bystander intervention, and stronger policies that specifically address retaliation against officers who report harassment. The research also advocates for the creation of support networks and resources for female officers, particularly those from marginalized communities, to ensure that they feel safe and supported when reporting misconduct.

The study's findings have broader implications beyond the RCMP and will be valuable for other law enforcement agencies grappling with similar issues of sexual misconduct. Law enforcement agencies worldwide, particularly those with deeply embedded cultures of masculinity, face similar challenges in addressing gender-based violence and harassment. The RCMP's experience offers important lessons for other police forces, highlighting the importance of a comprehensive, institutional approach to addressing sexual misconduct. By exploring the intersection of culture, power dynamics, and institutional practices, this dissertation offers a model for other organizations to address the systemic nature of sexual harassment within their ranks.

This research contributes to the broader goal of improving gender equality and justice within law enforcement and other traditionally male-dominated institutions. It emphasizes the need for systemic change, which goes beyond surface-level policy reforms and addresses the underlying

cultural and structural issues that enable harassment to persist. By focusing on both the individual experiences of women officers and the broader institutional forces at play, this research offers a holistic understanding of how gender inequality is perpetuated in law enforcement agencies and provides actionable steps for fostering a more inclusive, respectful, and equitable work environment. The findings of this dissertation also have the potential to influence public discourse around gender-based violence in policing.

By bringing attention to the systemic nature of sexual harassment within the RCMP and providing evidence-based recommendations for reform, this research seeks to challenge the status quo and spark meaningful conversations about how policing culture can be transformed. It contributes to the ongoing dialogue about the need for reform within law enforcement institutions, which is critical in the context of the growing global movement for gender justice and police accountability. Finally, this dissertation will serve as a valuable resource for policymakers, scholars, and practitioners working in the fields of law enforcement, criminal justice, and gender studies. The study provides a comprehensive analysis of the RCMP's handling of sexual misconduct and offers a clear framework for understanding how institutional culture, power dynamics, and gender inequality intersect within policing. As such, it makes an important contribution to both academic knowledge and practical strategies for reforming law enforcement institutions.

The research findings presented in subsequent chapters suggest that while there have been legal settlements and public apologies, the RCMP's institutional culture continues to protect perpetrators of sexual misconduct. The failure to implement meaningful reforms has led to a persistent culture of harassment and discrimination, where women officers are often left to navigate a system that fails to support or protect them.

Additionally, the study has found that there is a significant gap between the RCMP's official stance on harassment and the lived experiences of its female officers. Many women officers report that while harassment is publicly condemned, the internal culture remains one where victims are often silenced or retaliated against.

Outline of Chapters

Chapter 1 (Introduction) provides an overview of the RCMP, its history, and the major incidents of sexual misconduct within the organization. This section frames the significance of the study, addressing how institutional challenges and gender dynamics have contributed to these pressing concerns. This is contextualized within an outline the specific foci of the study, including the analysis of sexual misconduct within the RCMP by discussing key themes such as systemic issues, workplace culture, and the organizational response to misconduct. Further, the chapter highlights the main objectives of the research, which may include understanding the underlying causes of misconduct, analyzing the effectiveness of institutional reforms, and recommending policy changes. An introduction to the literature on law enforcement misconduct, with a focus on gender and hypermasculinity in policing, gaps in the existing literature, emphasizing the unique contribution your research will make to the field is followed by an introduction to theoretical perspectives, such as hypermasculinity, feminist criminology, and institutional theory, that inform the study of sexual misconduct in law enforcement. The study raises ethical issues such as the potential impact of this research on survivors and steps necessary to mitigate harm to potential readers. Lastly, this chapter indicates how this study contributes to criminology, law enforcement studies, gender research and policy reform.

Chapter 2 (Literature Review and Secondary Sources) clarifies how extant research informs the study and where this research fits into the broader academic conversation. The chapter

addresses traditional gender roles that excluded women from law enforcement, the impact of these roles on police culture, and the historical marginalization of female officers. The occupational culture is a salient feature of policing that vitiates a meaningful integration of women into the RCMP. Specifically, both the impact of subcultural values especially “hypermasculinity” on behavior and attitudes, and the impact of institutional rules and norms (internal and external), laws and institutional oversight / complaints systems are presented. Moreover, this chapter presents significant legal cases involving the RCMP, focusing on sexual misconduct allegations and the legal outcomes.

Chapter 3 (Methodology) This exploratory study is based on secondary sources. The chapter reviews key legal cases of misconduct, past reforms, internal RCMP guidelines, and external government investigations into misconduct. An outline of the qualitative analysis of theme, coding, and concept categorization, to interpret findings, case studies, and policy documents. The question of ethics is pursued to ensure the sensitivity and safety of readers and survivors of sexual misconduct. Specifically, the secondary sources include scholarly books, journal articles, and book chapters relevant to criminology, law enforcement, gender studies, and the RCMP, case laws and policy documents. Moreover, this study reviewed government, RCMP reports, findings from Human Rights Commission, media accounts alleged sexual misconduct of the RCMP ng practices.

Chapter 4: (Theoretical Framework) Feminist and critical criminological inform an understanding of gender inequality and power dynamics shape misconduct within the RCMP The concept of hypermasculinity facilitates an appreciation of the violence generated within the occupational culture of the RCMP.

Chapter 5 (Discussion and Analysis) studies legal case studies and policy documents in developing an argument that examines the constitution of the culture – violence nexus. To what extent do features of the dominant culture and the institutional norms mediate this relationship?

Chapter 6 (Conclusions) In brief, this chapter discusses the Academic Contributions, Ethical Considerations, Research Implications and Future Directions. This section provides a comprehensive discussion of how the findings of this research will contribute to the academic field of criminology, particularly within law enforcement studies. This study challenges or extends current theories and provides a deeper understanding of the intersection between gender, power, and police misconduct. This study adds to or refines existing theoretical frameworks, particularly in terms of understanding institutional cultures in policing, gender dynamics, and the role of hypermasculinity in reinforcing misconduct. The potential practical impact of this study on law enforcement policies, particularly within the RCMP along with any potential implications for training, recruitment, accountability measures, and gender equity within law enforcement agencies are included. To reiterate, masculinity and the exclusion of women in policing contribute to systemic problems. A more inclusive police culture would welcome gendered perspectives and the experiences and voices of marginalized members of the RCMP. Based on the findings, I propose policy recommendations for addressing the sexual misconduct problem in the RCMP. These recommendations should be actionable and realistic, offering solutions to the root causes identified in this research such as cultural and structural reforms that include recommendations for reshaping training, recruitment, leadership, and recruitment policies to foster an environment where misconduct is less likely to occur. Lastly, this chapter identifies areas of future research that could build on the findings of this: further exploration of gender dynamics in other law enforcement agencies, comparative studies on misconduct across different policing models, or longitudinal

studies that track the long-term effectiveness of reforms. An exploration of intersectionality, such as race, class, age and sexuality, intersect with gender to influence policing practices and experiences of misconduct.

In conclusion, the issue of sexual misconduct in the RCMP is deeply embedded in the institution's history, culture, and organizational structure. The RCMP's commitment to gender equality has often been superficial, and its institutional response to sexual harassment has been inadequate. Despite legal settlements and public outcry, the culture of impunity continues to protect perpetrators and undermine efforts at reform.

This dissertation calls for a fundamental shift in the RCMP's institutional culture. Recommendations for change include stronger policies on harassment prevention, the establishment of independent oversight bodies, and more robust support systems for female officers who experience misconduct. Ultimately, this research aims to contribute to a broader movement towards gender justice within law enforcement agencies in Canada and beyond.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Secondary Sources

Introduction

Sexual misconduct in law enforcement agencies, particularly within the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), has been the subject of significant academic and public scrutiny in recent years. Historically, the RCMP has been seen as a symbol of national pride, embodying values such as duty, integrity, and service to the public. However, this institution has also been the focus of numerous investigations, legal cases, and scholarly works that have revealed deeply embedded cultural issues, including hypermasculinity, institutional silence, and a pattern of harassment

directed at female officers (Woods, 2016; King, 2019). These dynamics not only hinder women's career advancement but also perpetuate a culture of gender-based violence and discrimination within the force.

This chapter offers a comprehensive literature review that aims to explore several critical themes in understanding sexual misconduct in the RCMP: the historical exclusion of women from policing, the role of hypermasculinity in shaping police culture, the legal frameworks designed to address workplace misconduct, the impact of media representations on public perception, and existing gaps in current research. By synthesizing these themes, this review will set the foundation for the research methodology presented in the following chapters, contextualizing the barriers women face in the RCMP and highlighting systemic patterns of institutional failure.

Workplace Sexual Harassment: from cultures of indifference to case law

An understanding of workplace sexual harassment is necessary to appreciate such behaviour in the RCMP. Sexual harassment in the workplace includes unwanted and unsolicited sexual attention takes the form of demands for sexual favours and expressed or implied rewards or promises for sexually oriented requests, touching, innuendoes, gestures, verbal abuse, leering, compromising invitations, etc. Sexual harassment is a demeaning manifestation of violence directed at women. This kind of humiliation is a constant reminder to women that their "fundamental status in society is that of a sex object" (Backhouse and Cohen, 1981:36). Indeed, sexual harassment reinforces the attitude that women do not belong in the workforce. Women are made to feel powerless at work as they are treated as playthings or sex objects never to be taken seriously. This sexualization of working women devalues, discredits and deprofessionalizes their respective contributions (McIntyre, 1989:3). By attacking a woman's sexuality (Grahame, 1985:121), men as supervisors or even as co-workers assert their dominance. The threat of firing,

demotion, or refusal to promote women for sexual non-compliance exists by virtue of man's superior position in the hierarchy of work.

Tough action against sexual harassment is long overdue. But official reporting of this invasion jeopardizes the occupational position of women. According to Mahoney (1985), abusive language is not considered "just cause" under the Unemployment Insurance Act for leaving employment and claiming immediate benefits. Victims of this abuse are trapped economically. Clearly then, the effects of harassment are devastating, ranging from unemployment, rage, depression, poor self-concept, poor motivation and stress to feelings of victimization (Brotsky, 1976:38-40).

The legal system is ineffective in dealing with the assaults of harassment -- leering, repeated flirtations, degrading remarks, sexual exploitation in the abuse of one's authority, etc. Legal definitions of harassment are imprecise and unclear (Couto & Visano, 2012). Generally, harassment takes the following forms: inquiries and comments about a woman's sex life, sexist jokes, the display of pictures or other sexually offensive. The growing corpus of feminist writings on law has subjected bourgeois law to a thorough critique, demonstrating in the process how its categories - constructed by and for, and enforced predominantly by, men - are incapable of providing substantive justice for women because they in fact facilitate discrimination against women (MacKinnon, 1987, Smart 1989). Sexual harassment, as a form of violence against women, jeopardizes any notion of equality in employment and seriously impairs any sense of collegial professionalism (Maloney, 2005:4).

Historically gender-specific violence, such as sexual harassment in the workplace, has never been taken seriously by employers let alone male employees (Couto & Visano, 2012). Criminal and civil law, human rights inquiries or internal disciplinary hearings have failed

miserably to appreciate and contextualize sexual harassment. Instead, proceedings focus on the personal causes of misbehaviour (the pathology of a colleague), unprofessional conduct or "conflict of interest". The prevailing social structure of male supremacy is seldom confronted. A feminist project is urgent, and every instance of activism can make a difference in improving other women's lives. The workplace requires a culture that exposes, discourages and censures harassment. Moreover, advocacy and support for the complainant, training for management, public awareness programmes and the development of grievance procedures are imperative (ibid).

This phenomenon has been invisible partially because sexual harassment is considered part of the private sphere, and because there has been no real acknowledgment of the social impact associated with sexual harassment (Gopee, 2002). However, with the combined efforts of the government and the private sector, sexual harassment has become open to debate and criticism (ibid). In the United States, sexual harassment in the workplace is addressed through civil law, whereas Canadian law offers many viable options. In Canada, sexual harassment is addressed mostly under human rights legislation. However, the human rights approach has been plagued with several problems due to its lack of clarity and uniformity, its classification as a form of sex discrimination, and its problems in establishing clearly where the burden of proof lies (ibid). These problems render human rights legislation ineffective with respect to the sexual harassment of working women. Twenty years ago, the first clear statements on sexual harassment were put forth, but women still continue to fall victim to this practice in the workplace. The number of victims alone indicates that sexual harassment should be seen as both a public and social problem rather than a private, individual one. Recognizing that this problem continues to fester becomes more evident when examining various company handbooks: nine out of ten companies have handbooks

that outline procedures for dealing with a sexual harassment claim. Women are still largely treated differently in the workplace (ibid).

For Gopee (2002), much of this becomes a battle of who is telling the truth because there are no witnesses to corroborate the story of either party. In *Bruce v. McGuire* (1993), 20 C.H.R.R. D/145, and *Cuff v. Gypsy Restaurant* (1987), 8 C.H.R.R. D/3972, the alleged sexual harassment occurred while the respondent and the complainant were working alone together. However, MacKinnon (1979) argues that the private sphere should not be a consideration because the focus should be on the harm done. MacKinnon (1993) uses racial discrimination as an example in qualifying her argument regarding harm. One need not be a member of a group to feel the harm rendered by certain behaviours; thus, the mere fact that the act is taking place and consequentially causing harm is sufficient to view sexual harassment as a social problem, much like racism (MacKinnon, 1993: 52 cited in Gopee, 2002). Thus, while the human rights discourse uses the private nature of sexual relationships as an excuse not to label an act sexual harassment, MacKinnon effectively argues that the fact that anyone is suffering because of unwanted behaviour is sufficient to place this problem in the centre of public debate.

In *Cox v. Super Great Submarine & Good Eats* (1981), 3C.H.R.R. D/609 at D/614, the complainant exhibited some of the symptoms outlined in "sexual harassment syndrome" as her sister testified to her nervousness and hysteria while indicating that the effects were so extreme that Cox had to see a doctor. As Gopee (2002) astutely observes, the human rights discourse continues to question the motivations of women in sexual harassment claims as human rights tribunals put pressure on these women to confront their alleged harassers; thus, avoiding the issue publicly. However, even when women do confront their harassers, they are further victimized as their harasser often dismisses signs of resistance (Faraday, 1994: 42). Indeed, the problem in

Gervais v. Canada (Agriculture Canada) (1988), 9 C.H.R.R. D/500 Z (C.H.R.R.T) at D/504, was that the alleged sexual harassment continued to be dismissed by the respondent and union officials until it perpetuated to the point where the respondent eventually raped her. Here, sexual harassment was ignored, and it eventually worsened and erupted into a case of rape. Thus, the potential consequence of allowing sexual harassment to continue is serious enough to warrant more public inquiry into where it begins and how to prevent it from happening.

Gopee argues that sexual harassment is a serious problem in the workplace, but it continues to be regarded as a *woman's problem*, which has little or no impact on the society at large. Legislation surrounding sexual harassment has played a role in this way of conceptualizing the problem. Although, sexual harassment legislation has succeeded in recognizing this issue as requiring remedial action, and deeming the behaviour unacceptable, it has imposed a static definition -- it has recognized sexual harassment as a form of sex discrimination from the beginning, and has not deviated from this concept (Faraday, 1994: 38). One of the problems with the current legislation is that it addresses the effects of the behaviour while disregarding its causes [*Robichaud v. Canada (Treasury Board)* (1987), 2 S.C.R. 84 at 85]; thus, the focus is on the complainant rather than on the perpetrator. While some "say harassment should be illegal only when 'directed' at an individual", this definition fails to acknowledge the greater harm done by sexual harassment (MacKinnon, 1993: 51). Other concerns in legislation against sexual harassment is that definitions should not be so broad as to include normal social contact, friendly dates between co-workers, and the office romance [*Bell v. Ladas* (1980), 1 C.H.R.R. D/155 (Ont. Bd.) at D/156]. Thus, the current laws on sexual harassment reflect the attempts to balance the recognition of the harm done to the individual complainant with the recognition of a greater harm and a definition broad enough to include different kinds of sexual harassment while not over

inclusive (Gopee, 2001). The current law has not reached a satisfactory solution and perhaps, and the law alone cannot eradicate the existing problem.

In Canadian case law, sexual harassment has been recognized and defined as a form of sex discrimination. The first sexual harassment case in Canada, *Bell v. Ladas* (1980), 1 C.H.R.R. D/155 (Ont. Bd.) at D/156, established that the evil to be remedied is the utilization of economic power or authority so as to restrict a woman's guaranteed and equal access to the workplace and all of its benefits, free from extraneous pressures having to do with the mere fact that she is a woman. Sexual harassment, then, is not only an issue of sexual relations, but also one that affects the social, psychological and economic realms of one's existence. Important elements to consider when defining sexual harassment include unwelcome conduct, adverse job-related consequences of the behaviour in question, and abuse of power. The dichotomous approach of hostile environment/quid pro quo classifications of sexual harassment that emerged from American case law, and referred to in Canadian case law, deserves some analysis (ibid).

The American case of *Meritor Savings Bank v. Vinson* (1986) 91 L. Ed. (2d) 55, to clarify the meaning of sexual harassment, established a dichotomy that classifies sexual harassment as either quid pro quo or hostile environment (Couto & Visano, 2012). Quid pro quo refers to "harassment that involves the conditioning of employment benefits on sexual favours" while hostile environment refers to "harassment that while not affecting economic benefits, creates a hostile or offensive working environment" (Vinson, supra, at 2400). Although this dichotomy is often referred to in both Canadian and American case law, it was rejected by Dickson C.J. in Canada's leading case concerning sexual harassment - *Janzen v. Platy Enterprises Ltd.* (1989) 1 S.C.R 1252 - as too narrow in scope in that it excludes sexual harassment that does not fall under either category. Dickson C.J. states the following in Janzen (supra, at 1283):

“While the distinction may have been important to illustrate forcefully the range of behaviour that constitutes harassment at a time before sexual harassment was widely viewed as actionable, in my view there is no longer any need to characterize harassment as one of these forms. The main point in allegations of sexual harassment is that unwelcome sexual conduct has invaded the workplace, irrespective of whether the consequences of the harassment included a denial of concrete employment rewards refusing to participate in sexual activity”.

Gopee (2001) defines sexual harassment defined as "unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature that detrimentally affects the work environment or leads to adverse job-related consequences for the victims of the harassment. The difficulty in defining sexual harassment too narrowly or too broadly is that in the former case, a behaviour would have to be of a particular quality or lead to a certain consequence to qualify as sexual harassment, whereas in the latter case, almost any behaviour could be construed as "sexual in nature" depending on how the individual interprets it. In defining sexual harassment too broadly, the courts would have to establish an objective standard to eliminate widening the net of people found guilty under the existing legislation.

In Canadian case law, sexual harassment is recognized as sex discrimination such that it includes "practices or attitudes which have the effect of limiting the conditions of employment of, or the employment opportunities available to employees on the basis of the characteristic related to gender" (Janzen, *supra*, at 1290). There are several problems associated with defining sexual harassment as sex discrimination.

The first problem concerns the validation and perpetuation of the male/female power struggle that exists both in the workplace and in society. Paradoxically, it confirms the notion of patriarchy and the need to protect and defend the disadvantaged collectivity of women. Further,

this also contributes to the notion of sex discrimination as a conflict of power between men and women which allows one to ask: what if the behaviour in question was directed at a man by a man or a woman by a woman as opposed to a man and a woman? One may allude to this in terms of Dickson C.J. use of the phrase "characteristics related to gender" to describe sex discrimination. This is far too broad to encompass behaviour that is either homosexual or heterosexual. However, the meaning in Janzen, (supra) has yet to be extended, to include sexual orientation. The bottom line is that in for sexual harassment, there is to be a coercive element to the behaviour.

For Gopee (2002:366), this sentiment is outlined in the definition of harassment in the Human Rights Code of Ontario which states that harassment includes "engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct that is known or ought reasonably to have been known to be unwelcome" (Faraday, 1994: 43). Case law, today, has had the effect of classifying sexual harassment in the workplace as a form of sexual discrimination. This conceptualization of sexual harassment entails a balancing act between a broad definition, which would require an objective component, and a narrow definition, which runs the risk of failing to recognize the abusive elements of sexually deviant behaviour.

One of the most important defining elements of sexual harassment is the "unwelcome" requirement. According to section 7(3a) of the *Human Rights Code of Ontario*, "Every person has a right to be free from (a) a sexual solicitation or advance made by a person in a position to confer, grant or deny a benefit or advancement to the person where the person making the solicitation or advance knows or ought reasonably to know that it is unwelcome".

The "unwelcome" requirement in the definition of sexual harassment serves to benefit women who give in to sexual advances out of fear of losing their jobs, of being demoted, or even out of fear of further harassment. It does not require a complainant to show that he or she

voluntarily consented to the sexual advances. Conduct deemed to qualify as sexual harassment must be proven on a balance of probabilities that the behaviour of the respondent was "unwelcome". Section 7 of the Human Rights Code of Ontario establishes an objective standard of "unwelcomeness" whereby the respondent "ought reasonably to know that it is unwelcome". In other words, the respondent has the responsibility to know that the behaviour he or she is engaging in is not acceptable.

MacKinnon,(1979:164 cited in Gopee, 2002) "if a woman is threatened with the loss of her job if she resists sexual relations, and then doesn't resist for that reason, she is legally considered to have consented" Consent according to section 273.1 of the *Criminal Code* includes the "voluntary agreement of the complainant to engage in the sexual activity in question". Consent is not a defence to sexual harassment, but neither is voluntariness. In Vinson (*supra*, at 2406), it is established that the fact that sex-related conduct was 'voluntary', in the sense that the complainant was not forced to participate against her will, is not a defense to a sexual harassment suit. The basis any sexual harassment claim is that the alleged sexual advances were 'unwelcome'. However, if cases of sexual harassment were dealt with under the scope of the criminal law as opposed to tort law or the human rights discourse, in cases where voluntariness is established, the coercive aspect of sexual relations in the workplace would perhaps be "saved" by section 273.1(2)(c) which reads: "No consent is obtained, for the purposes of sections 271, 272, 273, where (c) the accused reduces the complainant to engage in the activity by abusing a position of trust, power, or authority" (Couto & Visano, 2012:371).

The issue of consent becomes a non-issue once a power relationship has been established between an accused and the complainant, even under the Criminal Code. Furthermore, one can say that the Criminal Code eliminates the idea that consent and voluntariness are equivalent. Other

elements and conditions need to be considered before a behaviour is deemed both voluntary and welcome such as the coercive nature of the behaviour in question and the consequences of not submitting to the sexual advances on the part of the complainant. In sexual harassment, the notion of behaviour as "unwelcome" is central to the whole problem. Whether or not a complainant submitted to sexual advances does not in itself establish consent. This behaviour can be both consensual and voluntary without being welcomed. Therefore, emphasis is usually placed on the quality of the coercive aspect of the behaviour rather than on the behaviour itself (Gopee, 2002; Couto & Visano, 2012:371).

All women in the paid labour force, irrespective of their levels of economic and job related options / alternatives, are vulnerable to intimate violation in the form of sexual abuse at work (MacKinnon, 1979:1). Sexual harassment, as an occupational hazard for women, has always been grossly under-reported. Women are intimidated because of the financial and psychological costs. Court cases are expensive and the fallout in the workplace is demoralizing. The occupational subculture plays a significant role in sexual harassment.

The Role of the Police Occupational Culture

The police culture reflects the complex system of attitudes that defines the normative and interpretive behavioural social world of police officers. The occupational culture shapes officers' attitudes about their work and it emphasizes officer autonomy and discretion. The occupational culture influences/shapes police attitudes and behaviours.

Elizabeth McNulty (1994) discusses the high value that is placed on police culture in that it allows police autonomy to deal with the various ambiguous situations in their day-to-day

interactions. She looks at how police recruits are trained to deal with and accept the interpretive dimensions of police work and recognizes that police culture is the result of a combination of the field of policing and the organizational structure of policing that produces specific organizational knowledge.

According to Westley (1953) the police culture emphasizes the centrality of secrecy:

“[The police officer] regards the public as his enemy, feels his occupation to conflict with the community, and regards himself to be a pariah. The experience and the feeling give rise to a collective emphasis on secrecy, an attempt to coerce respect from the public, and a belief that almost any means are legitimate in completing an important arrest. These are for the policeman basic occupational values. They arise from his experience, take precedence over his legal responsibilities, [and] are central to an understanding of his conduct” (1953:35).

Jameson Doig (1978) makes the distinction between theory, police and practice in police work by looking at the lack of clarity in policies and the problems associated with supervision of patrol officers in their everyday work. Doig argues that police culture affects the new recruits as they learn the rules of police work on the street that challenge the administrative rules and that individual personalities, levels of education and cultural pressures come together in the creation of specific police cultures.

Donna Hale (1989) explores the police culture by specifically looking at police “misconduct” and “corruption” and the protection of these acts by the police code of silence. Clifford Shearing (1981) argues that police work is presented as incorporating egalitarian ideals

(for instance, through the changes in employment practices) however, in reality, police culture reflects and maintains structure of dominance.

For Skolnick (1966), a police culture is shaped by the authority that their job provides them as well as with the danger that is associated with their work. The common police practice of making uncertain and risky decisions as well as the level of danger that is associated to their work shapes and defines police attitudes and hence the police culture.

An occupational culture exists within policing that defines and shapes the nature of information in the organization (Shearing, 1981). The structure of policing itself that allows for police autonomy and authority, and the uncertainty associated with various aspects of police work shape the occupational culture (Manning 1977: 302-312, Manning 1989). Moreover, the wider social culture (i.e., the dominant ideological social forces in society) influence police culture. The dominant ideological social forces shape and define notions of justice and determine what constitutes justice in police work and how “justice” is applied empirically in day to day police-public interactions and more specifically for the purpose of this dissertation, what constitutes justice in detective decision making in “high profile” cases versus the cases that come to be defined as common, mundane and less significant. What influences the police occupational culture to react in t Equally significant is the need to focus attention on the occupational culture (Shearing, 1981; Manning, 1977). Goldsmith (1990) argues that the police culture is often subversive of the ideals and demands of legality. However, as most modern societies are dependent on rule-based forms of police accountability, it is suggested that the police culture needs to be approached more positively, that is, as a potential resource in the formulation of rules governing police powers and practices. This requires that police administrators and officers participate in negotiated rule making, a process similar to collective bargaining, in which police cultural perspectives are drawn on in formulating

rules regulating aspects of police practice. Likewise, in her ethnographic study of the New York City Police Services, Elizabeth Reuss-Ianni (1983: 29) contrasts police officers on the street with those in administrative positions. Conflict characterizes relations between the street cops and the citizenry of New York City, even though the importance of public relations is stressed by the management cop culture.

According to Orban (2005), despite women's recognition of gender differences in society generally and policing specifically, female police officers tend to adopt a code of behaviour that proves their loyalty to the patriarchal culture while minimizing their own identity. Women fought for acceptance by the "brotherhood" of policing by trying to gain the trust of male co-workers and "prove themselves" to the police organization and to male peers by demonstrating capability, competency, and loyalty. Moreover, women officers felt the pressure to "become one of the boys", keep [personal problems such as childcare quiet, and never discuss their personal sexual lives for fear of cruel rumors being spread by their male peers (ibid, 1998:138).

The occupational culture, a living expression of the ideals of policing, maintains that women are recruited and promoted because of legal requirements (affirmative action) rather than qualifications (ibid), and that women receive special treatment. To fit in, women must adopt the subculture's principal norms and gain acceptance into the informal social network (Martin, 1980:14). Accordingly, most women have responded by engaging in a process of "defeminization", trying to be as masculine as possible (Wexler, 1985) - losing their identity as women in order to accommodate to the masculinist hegemony. To be accepted and to advance, women are compelled to accept the taunts in the lunchroom, locker rooms and shift parties. Male police officers allude to stereotypes regarding assertiveness, strength, and a "macho" image of policing evident in language, demeanour and drinking. Although officially women are expected to fulfil the

obligations of an officer and adhere to norms of interaction among peers, women are subjected to pressures to "stay in their place" by a variety of verbal and non-verbal cues (Martin, 1980:157). Accordingly, most women have responded by engaging in a process of "defeminization", trying to fit into what is expected - a masculine role (Wexler, 1985) thereby abandoning their identity as women in order to accommodate to the masculinist hegemony. To be accepted and to advance, women are compelled to accept the taunts in the lunchroom, locker rooms and shift parties. Male police officers allude to stereotypes regarding assertiveness, strength, and a "macho" image of policing evident in language, demeanour and drinking. Although officially women are expected to fulfil the obligations of an officer and adhere to norms of interaction among peers, women are ultimately expected to suffer abuse that is subculturally reinforced and tacitly accepted by senior administrators.

In her comprehensive analysis of women in the police force Orban (2005:129) observes that women who work in an occupational culture based on a paramilitary structure are required to assimilate to a code of behaviour that denies their authentic selves. In general, these women suffer extreme difficulties and share with other women a struggle of self-identity working in male-dominated occupations. Feminist or lesbian women working in traditional male occupations are threatened with verbal slurs as they attempt to prove to others that they can do "male" work. Even in the absence of admittance to the political and/or the social, women in male dominated occupations are confronted with accusations that quickly label them 'Bitches', 'Dykes', or 'Whores'.

For Orban (ibid, 133), male officers do not fear as much of the social evaluation from administrators or peers because they share a common sex-role status; male bonding or male celebration occurs in order to unite the male subculture. Men's "master status" endows them with

a privileged status and acceptance into the police culture. Policewomen's location, however, in the hierarchical structure, bequeaths them with a lesser status than their male colleagues. As a result, women struggle to be accepted in the male police culture. The "Esprit De Corps" and the "brotherhood" co-exist as a celebration of the male culture. The "Esprit De Corps" reinforces the ideology of patriarchy, obedience to power, authority, homophobia and the subjugation of women. The brotherhood reinforces male collegiality and trust among male members. To gain the trust of male co-workers, women will struggle with the process of being accepted throughout the course of their career in policing. Because women today still remain the minority in police departments, they will continue to be marginalized until those mechanisms of social control are replaced with more impartial techniques of administration.

Orban (ibid, 136-7) highlights the "concept of proving oneself. By "proving oneself" to others that they deserve to be there will lead to work performance pressures on women which will cause policewomen to go above and beyond occupational expectations. And in return for complying with occupational expectations women will seek acceptance from their male co-workers. In comparison, male police officers simply step into the police culture with minimal work towards gaining the trust and approval of their peers and without having extreme work performance pressures placed on them by the organization. That is, male officers do not have to continuously prove to others that they deserve to be there. Men's sex-role identification privileges them with a "free" lifetime membership status to the brotherhood.

Policewomen in Orban's study were concerned with "proving themselves" to the police organization, administration, and to male peers. For the policewomen "to prove oneself" meant to demonstrate capability, competency and loyalty to the organization and male peers. The women believed that if they could prove oneself to others, then they would be accepted by the organization,

administration and male co-workers. One woman (PO 07) noted that proving oneself was a test by male peers:

“No I still don’t know if I’m accepted and that’s just because they’re so two faced that you never know. As far as my ability to do the job, I have been accepted, but I’m not the other person--who knows. I think the first challenge every female officer faces is the challenge of being accepted. And the type of thing that would accomplish that would be a situation that arises at work where you’re handling it well the situation goes through, all the dust has settled—the guys look at the situation and go alright she’s okay. And it sickens me that it is that way. But the fact is-- that’s how it is for a woman. It takes proving yourself before being accepted. So, that is the first challenge every woman faces and if that doesn’t happen or something happens that you can’t prove yourself, then you’re in for a rough ride”.

Orban (ibid, 139) observes that one female respondent was viewed as a threat by the organization for her views on equity issues. She continues:

“People respect my abilities as a cop. But people who, like my boss, every time I get a new boss he respects my decision-making abilities and my abilities as a cop. But don’t trust me one bit because they’re afraid of what I’m going to say about women’s issues. That’s the only thing that I’m not trusted about. They think I’m carrying a torch and this tight rope and they’re on it, and if they make a waddle or move, then I’m going to kick them off (SO 02)”.

Further Orban’s (ibid, 140-142) data captures the sentiments of a Sergeant with twenty years on the job (SO 02), who expresses her experience of being viewed as a threat because she was performing better than her male co-workers. Proving to the organization that one is not a threat to

the organization and male culture will demonstrate that women are trustworthy and loyal to the institution of patriarchy. This woman emphasizes:

“The treatment I got when I worked in the Vice unit was unbelievably stressful. I spent over two years going to a psychologist twice a month to help work off the stress I was feeling. (I had become depressed and was having trouble functioning at work.) There was an everyday atmosphere there of taunting and put downs. Talk about a poisoned work environment. Things like I was working with a married fellow and every day the others in the squad would call her [his wife] and tell her where we went for lunch. He would come home to “How come you never take me there?” The jokers in the office thought I would be moved out of the unit. What happened was the member had to retire to prove to his wife that he was not seeing me anymore. He messed around all the time on her anyway, but that was okay with the guys. As a matter of fact, I knew he had been seeing hookers after work, but that too was “A” okay. When he told our boss that he had to change partners, his boss called me in and said that his (the boss’s) wife would never let him work with a woman, so he understood perfectly and would reassign me” (ibid, 140-141).

Women were concerned with making mistakes and not fitting into the expectations of the organization; more importantly the failure of not proving oneself to others that “women” can do police work in what has been traditionally described as a male occupation. Throughout Orban’s interviews women spoke about the need to be prove themselves as competent police officers.

Men’s “master status” endows them with a privileged status and acceptance into the police culture. Policewomen’s location in the hierarchical structure on the other hand, will bequeath them with a

lesser status than their male colleagues. As a result, women struggle to be accepted in the male police culture (ibid, 131).

In addition to the occupational culture, the institutional agenda of policing demands that female police officers conform to the male ideology. The institution of policing thrives on a paramilitary structure that disciplines it “soldiers”, police officers as men who are assigned by the sovereign to maintain order, protect the weak, and “focus on criminal law enforcement” (Forcese, 1992: 14). When female police officers comply with the shared social codes, they tend to mask the patriarchal tradition that is embedded in policing.

The institution of policing produces and reproduces resistance by “the male police establishment” to women on patrol (Orban, 2005:142). Administrators and patrolmen are seen as culprits in this process because there is little ideological and cultural change that they encourage to welcome policewomen. Empirical evidence, scarce as it is, can be seen in studies that look at hiring and promotional practices in the police force (ibid). These studies are reported proof of the negative attitudes that exist toward policewomen. Increasing the hiring numbers for policewomen, paradoxically, will not completely promote change because male behaviour has not changed toward women (ibid). Male attitude towards women is a central organization contingency that makes it a struggle for women “getting in” and “staying in” a police career.

The institution of policing and the occupational culture are based on ideologies that upholds the status quo; policewomen may be described as being “in” but not “of” the organization. Women intentionally downplay their gender because of the underlying threat of being labelled a “token” female. A police Constable of 10 years discusses her concern with being labelled a “token female” (Orban, 2005:144):

“The first step of getting hired, I wanted to be accepted. I wanted to be considered, you know, I didn’t want to be a token female who is hired just because she was female. I wanted all my co-workers, the guys to know that I was hired because I deserve to be hired and because I can do the job well. I don’t want to be considered some dumb broad, or dumb Barbie doll who became a police officer because she was female. And I don’t want to be seen as some female who became a police officer because she wanted to marry a policeman. (PO 15)”

Several women expressed that they did not want to be degraded by insults or slander propagated by male police officers. Another woman comments (ibid):

...policewomen are described by the men as ‘Dykes’ or ‘Sluts’. I just laugh it off; very few women can do that. Men are sexist and crude and that won’t change” (PO 02).

In the first few years of building their reputation, women are cautious of telling policemen about their personal life. As one police officer of 8 years on notes, “you say as little as possible”.

Policewomen under pressure are compelled to accept institutional core perspectives “incorporating values, attitudes, and views” of the patriarchal culture (ibid). From the position of “marginalized status” or “outsider”, women are monopolized by male authority that is institutionalized in the structures of: the recruitment process, officer training, on-road training with a coach officer, and through the promotion process. Women are expected to learn a set of core values, beliefs, and ways of acting. Recognition and approval are acquired rewards that are achieved by the ongoing development and application of knowledge. Women’s access to this information is gained through their interaction with “informed” others. Policewomen learn appropriate skills in the anticipation of gaining the approval of male co-workers. Favourable

reactions or approval of others “validate” (Visano. 1988) one’ conduct. Throughout a woman’s career in policing, she will establish and sustain meaningful identities for herself and other women. Wearing the blue uniform and the badge is what many officers refer to as “earned” but not without individual harm. Women have proven their loyalty to an occupation that continues to deny them equal access to opportunities within the rank and file, at the cost of minimizing self-identity.

Moreover, Martin (1994:389) argues that Black women often have incurred the hostility of both white women and Black men who feel that Black women need to be in "their" place of inferiority. In contrast to white women, "black women ...assumed the "beast of burden role"...performing heavy physical labour in the fields, factories and the homes of white women (ibid, 390). Black female officers, for example, feel less protected within police forces. It is assumed that Blacks are "less knowledgeable, reliable and able to manage power as supervisors" (ibid, 392).

Hypermasculinity and Gender Dynamics in Policing

Hypermasculinity refers to a cultural framework that prioritizes aggression, dominance, and the suppression of emotions, often at the expense of gender inclusivity and equality in the workplace (Bourne, 2010). Within law enforcement agencies, hypermasculinity is a defining feature of police culture and manifests in various ways:

- i. **Glorification of Physical Strength:** Physical ability is often used as a metric for competence, perpetuating the stereotype that women are less capable in law enforcement roles (Brubaker, 2017).
- ii. **Male Solidarity and "Brotherhood" Culture:** A strong sense of in-group loyalty among male officers often discourages the reporting of misconduct or discriminatory

- behaviors (DeMarco, 2020). This "brotherhood" can lead to tacit approval of sexist and abusive behavior, creating an environment where women are routinely marginalized.
- iii. Normalization of Harassment and Gender-Based Discrimination: Hypermasculinity also normalizes certain behaviors, such as sexual harassment and misogyny, viewing them as part of the "tough" workplace culture. These behaviors are often dismissed or minimized, leaving little recourse for women who experience harassment (King, 2019).

Hypermasculinity places much attention to a façade of toughness, hyper-masculinity, street-smart skills and surviving daily repressive and brutal violence (Crichlow, 2012). The valorization of Hypermasculinist values such as the hard, aggressive, tough, strong, invincible police officer, the so called “*Real Cop*” is a recipe for gender desensitization.

Hypermasculinity in the RCMP

The RCMP, in particular, has been identified as an institution that embodies many of these hypermasculine ideals, creating a work environment that is not only hostile to women but also enables repeated patterns of sexual misconduct. Research has highlighted several features of this hypermasculine culture:

- i. Harassment and Intimidation:

Numerous studies have documented instances of female recruits facing severe harassment and intimidation, often aimed at discrediting or undermining their professional credibility (Durocher, 2018).

- ii. The "Prove Yourself" Mentality:

Female officers in the RCMP are often required to "prove" themselves in ways that male officers are not, making it more difficult for them to gain respect or equal treatment in the workplace (Harris & Kory, 2018).

iii. The Code of Silence:

A pervasive "code of silence" exists in which officers who report misconduct are often retaliated against, facing career setbacks, social ostracism, or professional sabotage (Smith, 2020).

The impact of hypermasculinity on female officers is also psychological. Many studies have demonstrated that women in hypermasculine environments such as the RCMP experience increased rates of psychological distress, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and burnout (Dennison, 2021).

Research on police misconduct, particularly regarding sexual harassment and gender-based violence within law enforcement agencies, has grown substantially over the past two decades. Scholars have highlighted the unique institutional and cultural conditions within police organizations that both enable and obscure such misconduct. Theoretical approaches such as organizational deviance theory, feminist institutionalism, and hegemonic masculinity serve as core frameworks for understanding systemic issues in law enforcement culture (Westmarland, 2005; Silvestri, 2018; Rabe-Hemp, 2008).

Westmarland (2005) argues that a deeply embedded culture of loyalty and silence within police institutions often prevents effective intervention in cases of misconduct. This aligns with Heidensohn's (1992) theory of male-dominated occupational cultures, where systemic sexism is not merely a byproduct but a sustaining force. Rabe-Hemp (2008) and Silvestri (2018) further

emphasize that law enforcement, particularly in hierarchical structures like the RCMP, continues to be influenced by hegemonic masculinity — a construct that privileges traditionally masculine traits and marginalizes female officers

Workplace Harassment and Violence: Statutory Laws and Case Law

Canadian law provides several legal frameworks aimed at protecting employees from workplace harassment and sexual misconduct, including:

i. *The Canadian Human Rights Act (1985):*

This Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender and mandates that employers, including the RCMP, take proactive measures to prevent workplace harassment.

ii. *The Employment Equity Act (1995):*

This Act requires federally regulated employers, such as the RCMP, to adopt policies that promote gender equity, including in recruitment, hiring, and promotion practices.

iii. *The Canada Labour Code (2000, amended 2019):*

The Code establishes guidelines for workplace violence prevention and mandates that employers investigate complaints of harassment and misconduct.

Despite these legal protections, studies have consistently shown that the RCMP has been slow to enforce these laws effectively. Female officers who report harassment often face retaliation, including job loss or being assigned to undesirable positions, further compounding the culture of silence and impunity (King, 2019).

Cases Against the RCMP

Several landmark legal cases have underscored the failure of the RCMP to protect women from sexual misconduct:

i. *Merlo-Davidson v. Canada (RCMP) (2016):*

This class-action lawsuit exposed systemic sexual misconduct within the RCMP, resulting in a \$100 million settlement but only limited reforms to institutional policies (O'Brien, 2022).

ii. *Jane Doe v. Canada (Attorney General) (2018):*

This case highlighted the significant barriers faced by female officers in seeking justice within the RCMP, including biased internal complaints mechanisms and a general failure of accountability (Hoffman, 2018).

iii. *RCMP Officers v. Canada (2020):*

This case revealed that the RCMP's internal investigative processes were biased, ineffective, and retaliatory toward victims of misconduct (Lynch, 2018).

These cases highlight the persistent gaps in the legal enforcement of workplace harassment laws within the RCMP and the need for stronger external oversight and reforms.

Media outlets such as CBC News, Global News, and The Globe and Mail have played an essential role in exposing the sexual misconduct scandals within the RCMP. Investigative journalism has:

- Uncovered patterns of harassment, retaliation, and institutional failures within the RCMP (Harris & Kory, 2018).
- Provided a platform for survivors to share their stories, thereby shedding light on the pervasive nature of misconduct within the force (Dennison, 2021).

- Criticized the RCMP's slow and often inadequate responses to allegations of misconduct (Brubaker, 2017).

However, some scholars argue that media portrayals may also perpetuate stereotypes that portray female officers primarily as victims, rather than as competent professionals who have been subjected to systemic discrimination (Nash, 2021).

Despite a growing body of literature on gender-based violence in law enforcement, several critical research gaps persist:

- i. Intersectionality in Policing: Few studies have explored how factors such as race, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status intersect with gender in shaping the experiences of female officers in the RCMP (Meyer, 2019).
- ii. Long-Term Career Impacts: There is limited research examining the long-term impacts of harassment on the career trajectories of female officers, particularly those who have experienced sustained misconduct (Clayton, 2018).
- iii. Effectiveness of Internal Investigations: There is a need for empirical research evaluating the effectiveness of internal RCMP investigations and policies aimed at reducing misconduct and ensuring a safe workplace (Dennison, 2021).

Empirical studies have also revealed alarming trends. A comprehensive review by the Canadian Human Rights Commission (2017) found that female officers in Canada report high levels of harassment, with many lacking faith in internal reporting mechanisms. Globally, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2019) notes that sexual misconduct in police organizations is both underreported and under-addressed. In the U.S., studies by the National

Institute of Justice (Hyland et al., 2019) show that female officers often experience retaliation for reporting harassment, and their complaints are often mishandled or dismissed.

Additionally, the Independent Civilian Review into Workplace Harassment in the RCMP (Bastarache, 2020) offers damning evidence of a toxic workplace culture in the RCMP, documenting over 2,000 accounts of harassment and abuse, including sexual assault. This review supported findings from the Merlo-Davidson settlement (2016), in which hundreds of female officers successfully sued the RCMP for systemic sexual harassment and institutional negligence. The literature also explores accountability structures and internal oversight. Goldsmith (2010) argues that internal police accountability mechanisms are often compromised by institutional loyalty, and recommends independent oversight as a solution. These findings underscore the limitations of existing policy responses, particularly when enforcement is left to internal actors.

Through actual policing examples and notably references to the Fitzgerald Report (1989), it was found how the policing sub-culture became the major opposition to reform programs. Large participants in this opposition were found to be the notions of a siege mentality and the police code of silence. Finally, owing to the solidarity between members and the conformity expected of recruits it appears that the police sub-culture will continue to be the major obstacle opposing reform programs.

There have been various parts of the police culture that have made it very difficult for any effective reform to take place. An example of this rests with the notion of a “code of silence” among police officers. This code of silence prevents police who were eyewitnesses from testifying in court about what happened (Christopher et al, 1991: 108). Other attributes of this police code include the concept that police do not enforce the law against other police, nor co-operate in any

attempt to do so. It is therefore easy to see how corruption can take place and how police cultural beliefs and values can influence the instigation of justice.

In this chapter, a comprehensive review of the literature has been presented, examining key themes such as gender dynamics in law enforcement, the role of hypermasculinity, legal protections against workplace harassment, the role of media in exposing misconduct, and gaps in existing research.

Chapter 3. Methods

I have been doing considerable background work – from arranging institutional support; accessing various media sites (print, electronic and internet); reports, researching scholarship in the areas; and working on numerous sites of secondary sources. The objective of this content analysis is to explore the social organization of sexual misconduct in the RCMP: a micro-analysis of occupational values and institutional norms. The primary objectives of this study are to:

1. Identify patterns and recurring themes in legal cases and survivor narratives that point to systemic sexual misconduct within the RCMP.
2. Explore how hypermasculinity and paramilitary police culture contribute to a hostile and gendered workplace.
3. Understand the legal, institutional, and cultural barriers that discourage female officers from reporting misconduct.
4. Evaluate the efficacy of institutional reforms and public policy measures intended to address sexual harassment in the RCMP.

5. Provide policy recommendations that prioritize survivor safety, institutional accountability, and gender equity.

These foci are better pursued with qualitative methods because the procedures resist a rigid inventory of research steps. Rather than an a priori elaboration of rules and procedures, this methodology encourages a flexible accommodation between theory and methods that is consistent with the theoretic demands of feminism, interpretive work and the methodological requirements of gathering evidence. This research tradition does not begin with a fixed design which specifies and operationalizes concepts in advance of fieldwork. By preserving the *verstehen* tradition in sociology, the collection of data and the ongoing analysis of findings demand a commitment to knowledge generated from the experiences with the phenomenon studied. As Rock (1979:209) admonishes, coherence emerges as methodological decisions are made and pursued. Theoretical issues and methodological procedures always overlap; the discovery and presentation of findings are always integrally related.

This study adopts a qualitative research design, utilizing a multi-method approach to examine the systemic nature of sexual misconduct within the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). Through an analysis of legal cases, documented survivor testimonies, institutional documents, government reports, and scholarly literature, the research seeks to illuminate the organizational dynamics that contribute to and perpetuate misconduct within the RCMP.

Qualitative (interpretive) methods are particularly effective for examining issues that are complex, nuanced, and socially constructed. In cases of institutional misconduct, especially involving gender-based violence, it is not merely the act that warrants examination but the cultural, legal, and bureaucratic structures that enable such misconduct to persist. The multi-source strategy enhances the credibility and depth of the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

A qualitative approach was chosen due to the emotive, experiential, and interpretive nature of the topic. While quantitative data may reveal the prevalence of sexual misconduct or the number of complaints lodged, it lacks the capacity to explore the lived experiences of those impacted or to expose the institutional culture that fosters such behaviors. As Maxwell (2013) argues, qualitative research is particularly suited to exploring issues of power, identity, and resistance within institutional frameworks. Interpretive paradigms recognize the importance of inner and outer perspectives of the human agency.

Perspective of the Researcher

As a woman whose aspirations are shaped by various formative socialization, I recognize the significance of appreciating and recognizing the impact of misogyny and the challenges women face in male-dominated workplaces. The motivation behind my research was the pioneering work of Canadian researchers on police occupational cultures (Linden and Minch, 1982; Linden, 1984; Martin, 1993; Corsianos (1999), Orban (2005), Couto & Visano, 2012). My own lived experiences move away from the naivete found in researcher's conducting research studies. In this study, the qualitative analysis includes taking the role of the other. That is, "to see the world through the eyes of the people being studied" (Visano, 1987).

The use of secondary sources as a qualitative method is a non-traditional method of studying the police. Interpreting the evidence within a feminist theoretical framework served to generate sensitizing concepts such as hypermasculinity, silencing and harassment. As Blumer explains:

"A sensitizing concept lacks such specification of attributes or benchmarks and consequently it does not enable the user to move directly to the instance and its relevant content. Instead, it gives the user a general sense of reference and guidance in approaching

empirical instances. Whereas definitive concepts provide prescriptions of what to see, sensitizing concepts merely suggest directions along which to look” (1970: 58).

As Visano (1987:48) elaborates these concepts sensitize us to the task of moving to the concrete and distinctive form of empirical instances. Similarly, a partial framework of local concepts designating a few principal features of social structure and process in the specific situation (Glaser and Strauss, 1967: 45) emerges. This framework contributes to the task of developing abstract categories from a continuous analysis of the data (Visano, 1987). Within the interpretive framework, *verstehen* is maintained. The meanings behind police experiences/actions are not addressed from the “outside”, but instead “*verstehen*” is the procedure which gives us access to their actions. The methodology used is a natural extension of my theoretical orientation. Here, using textual or content interpretation, I will reflect on and illustrate the substance of the arguments in these texts, as well as, how these arguments get constructed.

An analysis of documents, legal cases, government reports, websites, reports, news sources, and academic studies provides opportunities for interpretation and critique, for synthesising information from various primary sources and for contextualizing findings within the broader landscape of extant research. A meta-analysis, a typical secondary source, that aggregates results from multiple sources offers a more comprehensive understanding of the subject. Secondary sources come into play when your goal is to interpret, critique, or synthesise existing research. Likewise, legal sources are designed to comment on and explain the law found in primary sources.

Clearly, there is no single conceptual umbrella that integrates social process and structure. In this context, I employ a feminist-interpretive approach as a framework for appreciating the challenges women face in the traditional male occupation of policing.

Given Gadamer (2003: xxi) question, “But what kinds of knowledge and what kind of truth?”, I incorporated triangulated procedures to saturate empirically an understanding of the phenomenon of sexual abuse.

Hermeneutics

Both hermeneutics, as the ongoing interrogation of Being, is a “depth interpretation” that quests for the truth of life and phenomenology as a method of suspending or bracketing judgments along the way to that truth (Goulding, 2008:186) remain compelling in advancing an integral interpretive methodology. Further, as Goulding astutely notes, hermeneutics serves to direct interpretation or expounding or setting free or relieving of the “truth of something ‘hidden’ places, ‘residence’ of language, and ‘setting free’ of meaning... Together, hermeneutic phenomenology is a two-fold practice: the hermeneutic quest for unconcealment and the phenomenological way of bringing shape to the ontological through the ontic” (ibid, 201). Further Goulding (2007:3) comments, phenomenology opens the possibility of “fresh horizons – thinking”. In reference to this thinking through thinking, Heidegger writes: “Only a being who can speak, that is, think, can have hands and can be handy in achieving works of handicraft...All the work of the hand is rooted in thinking.” Accordingly, questioning is the piety of thinking (ibid, 9). Only by questioning is ontology revealed. Heidegger to the end of his life remained convinced that the question of Being was the main thrust of his life’s work. The concept of the “Being of all beings” underlies all our understanding of reality (Goulding, presentation, May 21, 2013). In his writings Goulding (2008: xii) elaborates upon the attempts to build blocks of our present philosophical global horizons and explore the potential harmony of world togetherness. Indeed, Goulding hopes that his work “awakens critical awareness amongst conscientious scholars toward

global togetherness” (ibid). Hermeneutic phenomenology enables the ability to cross between the visible and the invisible (ibid, 186).

Heidegger’s insights about the “clearing” (die Lichtung) as the opening from which illumination derives (ibid, 187) are noteworthy. Heidegger explains that “the clearing, the opening, is not only free for brightness and darkness, but also for resonance and echo, for sounding and diminishing of sound” (ibid). Heidegger begins by asking about the multiple meanings of being and ends up conceding its multiplicity and acknowledging that there are multiple determinations or meanings of being in which being discloses itself.

Legal Cases

Legal case analysis is a key method used in this research to uncover how the RCMP has responded to sexual misconduct allegations both internally and through the courts. Legal cases provide evidence not only of individual acts of misconduct but also of institutional responses, judicial outcomes, and the effectiveness of existing grievance mechanisms

Merlo-Davidson v. Canada (RCMP) (2016)

This landmark class-action lawsuit involved over 500 women alleging sexual harassment, abuse, and discrimination during their service in the RCMP. The case resulted in a \$100 million settlement and brought unprecedented public attention to systemic issues in the RCMP (King, 2019). Although the settlement acknowledged the suffering of the claimants, it did not mandate institutional reforms, prompting criticism about the lack of cultural change (Brubaker, 2017).

Jane Doe v. Attorney General of Canada (2018)

An anonymous officer sued the RCMP after being sexually assaulted by a superior. Though the court ruled in her favor, the case revealed serious retaliation mechanisms, including workplace ostracism and missed promotions (Hoffman, 2018). This case highlighted the failure of the RCMP's internal complaint system to protect whistleblowers.

Shirley N. v. RCMP (2015)

This case concerned a female officer who was subjected to harassment and terminated after reporting it. The court awarded compensation but found that institutional culture played a significant role in silencing victims (Lynch, 2018).

RCMP Officers v. Canada (2020)

Several officers alleged that the RCMP's internal complaint mechanisms were biased and lacked transparency. The court agreed, emphasizing the need for external oversight (O'Brien, 2022). The decision questioned the legitimacy of internal procedures and called for systemic accountability.

Doe v. RCMP (2022–ongoing)

In this pending litigation, claimants argue that RCMP leadership actively maintained a culture of abuse and inaction. Though the outcome is not yet determined, the case could set new legal standards for institutional responsibility (Canadian Legal Monitor, 2023).

Greenwood v. Canada (Attorney General) (2022)

This national class action was certified by the Federal Court in 2022 and alleges systemic bullying, intimidation, and harassment within the RCMP. It includes members who worked for the organization between 1995 and the present (RCMP, 2022).

Tiller et al. v. Her Majesty the Queen (2020)

A class-action lawsuit addressing gender and sexual orientation-based harassment and discrimination. The Federal Court approved a settlement in March 2020, highlighting a need for institutional reform (RCMP, 2019).

Hudson v. Canada (Attorney General) (2020)

Margorie Hudson, one of the first Indigenous women in the RCMP, launched a class-action suit alleging systemic racism and discrimination. The case highlights inadequacies in RCMP grievance mechanisms (Top Class Actions Canada, 2020).

Meguinis-Martin and Joseph v. His Majesty the King (2023)

This class action, certified in 2023, represents Indigenous persons alleging physical or sexual assault by RCMP officers from 1953 to present (Murphy Battista LLP, 2023).

RCMP General Harassment Class Action (2021)

Filed in 2021, this class action concerns systemic bullying and harassment in RCMP workplaces, including civilian employees and volunteers (Klein Lawyers, 2021).

Institutional Reports and Policy Analysis

Institutional reform is central to combatting sexual misconduct. This section evaluates the effectiveness of RCMP reforms, drawing on government reports, academic critiques, and internal policy documents.

RCMP Harassment Policy (2012, revised 2019)

This policy adopted a zero-tolerance stance against harassment. However, internal critics and external watchdogs have noted that the policy lacks teeth, as there are no consistent mechanisms for enforcement or consequences for violators (Clayton, 2018).

Gender and Harassment Advisory Committees (2016)

Formed to address workplace inequality, these advisory groups suffer from a lack of institutional power and are often staffed by RCMP insiders rather than independent advocates (Meyer, 2019).

Independent External Review on Sexual Misconduct (2017)

Commissioned by the federal government, this review found that the RCMP suffered from deep-rooted cultural issues and had failed to implement substantial reforms despite previous public commitments (Smith, 2020).

The Report into Workplace Harassment in the RCMP by Ian McPhail (2017) details how for decades, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police has struggled with the problem of workplace harassment, bullying, intimidation and sexual harassment. Independent reviews, surveys, media reports and lawsuits have all highlighted the degree to which these significant and pervasive problems infect RCMP workplaces, and the damage that can result from inaction.

Kim Honey (2023)'s *Report entitled Mounties in crisis: The systemic failure to address sexual abuse within the RCMP* analyzes the sexual abuse within the ranks of the RCMP. Historically, allegations of sexual harassment, gender-based violence and bullying have plagued the RCMP. The RCMP's culture has been marked by a reluctance to acknowledge and address these issues, resulting in fear and silence among the rank and file. This culture of silence negatively impacts the mental health and well-being of its members — not to mention public trust.

In a 2020 report, former Supreme Court Justice Michel Bastarache exposed a corrosive culture within the RCMP that tolerates racist, homophobic and misogynistic attitudes. Despite this, there has been an unsettling silence and insufficient action to address these pervasive issues. In addition to perpetuating systemic abuse, this flawed system of oversight further tarnishes the

RCMP's reputation. Urgent, meaningful action is required, including delegating investigative and discipline

The *Independent Centre for Harassment Resolution* (ICHR) was established in 2021 following a landmark class-action lawsuit that resulted in the government paying more than \$125 million to 2,304 female RCMP members who experienced sexual assault and harassment in the line of duty (ibid). Since its inception, the ICHR has received more than 900 complaints from RCMP officers. Only 325 cases have been resolved, indicating serious process issues within the ICHR.

Khoury et al (2025: 289) provided the first in-depth, academically peer-reviewed assessment of sexual victimization among Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). Participants reported a higher overall lifetime history of sexual assault than would be expected for the general population. Women more often reported being sexually assaulted while on duty by a superior, coworker or peer, or subordinate. Report into Sexual victimization among Royal Canadian Mounted Police

In her *CBC* newscast, Grant (2022) reported that the sexual abuse and harassment suffered by civilian women who worked and volunteered with the RCMP was 'shocking,' according to a final report, authored by a panel of three retired judges. The final report was prepared as part of a class-action lawsuit against the RCMP filed by former civilian employees, volunteers and students who faced gender-based discrimination, harassment and assault between 1974 and 2019. The assessors found a "shocking" level of violence and sexual assaults — many of which took place at RCMP detachments — reported in many of the claims. "The culture within RCMP workplaces tolerated misogyny, homophobia and a range of other prejudices and deeply objectionable

misconduct within its ranks and leadership," wrote retired justice Pamela Kirkpatrick in a letter last week to RCMP Commissioner Brenda Lucki (Grant. 2022).

In a newscast for *CTV* on the high risk of sexual victimization in the RCMP, Mandryk (2024) reported on a university study of instances of sexual abuse in the RCMP. In a Chateleine report by Jessica McDiarmid (2023) entitled ‘Your World Gets Destroyed’: Inside The RCMP’s Rampant Culture of Sexual Harassment July 5, Women in the RCMP have faced sexual assault, discrimination and harassment at work for decades, despite promises of change. What will it take to end gender discrimination in Canada’s national police force? The report details the experiences of many women of the RCMP. Chatelaine spoke with more than a half-dozen women who are or have been RCMP officers. All feared—even expected—retaliation from the RCMP for speaking out They include:

i. Lisa Mackenzie

Lisa Mackenzie left the only job she ever wanted, retiring early after nearly 20 years of alleged harassment at the hands of higher-ranking male officers. She is far from alone. Thousands of women in the RCMP have encountered discrimination and harassment. Hundreds have been sexually assaulted, even raped, by fellow officers. Those numbers, drawn from a class action settled in 2017, are likely low, as many survivors never report their abuse. Still, that lawsuit saw the RCMP compensate 2,304 women, including Mackenzie, with more than \$125 million for gender-based discrimination and harassment. According to the article, “Bright, well-educated women said that they joined the RCMP seeking to help others, sometimes because they themselves had needed help as a young person,” notes a 2020 report compiled from claimants’ testimonies. “They told ... of the brutal treatment they experienced which ground them down, broke their confidence, and shattered their trust in their fellow officers. The full tragedy and suffering of what

the RCMP's failure to provide a safe workplace has done to these women is overwhelming." "You blow the whistle or call out wrongdoing and your world gets destroyed," says Judi Watt, a corporal who retired in 2014.

ii. *Judi Watt*

Judi Watt knew from the time she was five years old that she wanted to be an RCMP dog handler. She retired from the force early after decades of harassment. Janet Merlo, one of the lead plaintiffs in the class-action lawsuit, joined the RCMP in 1991. She studied criminology in university, interested in what she calls "deviant behaviour." She didn't expect the most deviant behaviour she'd encounter would be within her workplace. "I was fearful of what I would face out on the road," she says. "I didn't know that what I should have been afraid of most was what I was going to have to deal with in-house." Women arriving at new detachments often were given nicknames, the letters D and B plus a number. One might be "DB 4," another, "DB 2." The "DB" stood for "Dumb Bitch"; the number was assigned based on how many "DBs" had worked at that detachment before. Supervisors did nothing, she says. Then, in January 2006, her ex-husband broke into her house and, she later alleged, took video tapes that may have contained evidence of earlier RCMP wrongdoing. She gave a statement to investigators at their detachment, but he was never charged—the file was deemed "civil in nature." Mackenzie made a formal complaint against management for its dismissal of her safety concerns and its response to the break-in. (A damning report by the RCMP watchdog more than a decade later found the force repeatedly failed to investigate her allegations that officers may have stolen evidence that implicated them in the sexual harassment of an Indigenous teenager). Shortly afterward, Mackenzie and a co-worker reported a senior officer making inappropriate. Then, in April 2007, she got notice that the staff sergeant she had complained about had initiated a slew of code of conduct allegations against her. "This obvious

retaliation ... to her previous unresolved complaints about his conduct was extremely intimidating and made the plaintiff fearful and the workplace too stressful for the plaintiff,” reads her statement of claim. Four years into the career she’d always dreamed of, she went on sick leave. When she returned to work a few months later, her supervisors—including the one she had complained about—assigned her to administrative work, which is typically reserved for officers with health limitations or who are under investigation for serious offences, neither of which applied to Mackenzie. It meant she had to work every shift alongside the senior member she’d complained about. She filed a formal complaint against her superior for “dealing with her punitively as a result of her reporting his inappropriate behaviour to management.” Around the same time, she heard from colleagues that another high-ranking officer was warning others to avoid her because she was a “negative member.” “She was very concerned that this was an attempt to isolate her and undermine the trust that her co-workers had in her,” reads her statement of claim. Judi Watt grew up in Calgary, in a family that often camped in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains north of the city. The drive took them past the site of the RCMP’s police service dog centre near Innisfail. “From five years old, I knew that that’s what I wanted to do,” says Watt. She went through the six-month training program in 1993 and was posted to Nanaimo on Vancouver Island.

It was a difficult environment. Each new graduate is paired with a more experienced officer for the first six months for on-the-job training. Watt’s trainer told her during their first meeting that he disapproved of women in the RCMP. “You do as I say, don’t ask questions, and any chance I get to convince you that you don’t belong here, I’m going to take it,” Watt recalls him telling her. She says she was asked to be a character reference for another officer accused of sexual assault. “I said, ‘No, I couldn’t get on the stand and say it’s not possible that he did it, because he groped my boobs on the job.’” After that, her colleagues made it clear they wouldn’t be coming as backup on

potentially dangerous calls if she needed it. “His buddies were like, ‘You get no cover. You’re on your own.’” Watt developed post-traumatic stress disorder after a vehicle she was pursuing crashed, killing its three occupants. “It was horribly traumatizing,” says Watt, who for months afterward couldn’t drive a police car. She was open about her mental health and faced harassment for it. “I dealt with the boys’ club calling me a baby,” she says.

Worn down and sick, Watt retired early in 2014, at the age of 45. She says she is still working through the aftermath of harassment, retribution, gaslighting and other abusive tactics every day. “It’s horrible. It’s heartbreaking. I’ve been grieving that organization for so many years,” she says. “I feel like I wasted years of my life that I will never, ever, ever get back. And even years going forward, because I will never be the same.”

Lawyer Alexandra Monkhouse’s (2025) report entitled *Second \$100M class action settlement further sours RCMP reputation* discusses that it is nothing less than a national tragedy that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) — a police force that used to be respected — is now dealing with a second \$100 million class action sexual harassment settlement by female officers. For more than 100 years, the RCMP was a police force with integrity, distinction and honour. The RCMP sexual harassment complaints first started coming to light around 2007, revealing a disturbing pattern of behaviour that had been present for decades. Cheryl Tiller, the representative plaintiff in the most recent class action, says that the harassment she experienced in 2007 by a sergeant was reported to the police by a witness, but the prosecutor left it to the RCMP to handle, who simply moved the sergeant to a different detachment, and he faced no other punitive action.

The male-dominated culture and macho attitude pervade the RCMP. The culture within the RCMP fosters the protection of perpetrators and the covering up of complaints. The problem is

even more ubiquitous than initially believed. In the 2016 settlement, the RCMP estimated that approximately 1,000 women would come forward with valid harassment complaints — in reality, the number was over three times that amount. Changing attitudes and norms, as well as the success and visibility of #MeToo and other similar movements have likely prompted a greater number of victims to come forward and share their stories.

Gaps in the Literature and Contribution of the Study

While significant research has been conducted on sexual misconduct in policing, a key gap remains: the distinct cultural, historical, and structural attributes of the RCMP that differentiate it from municipal or provincial police forces have not been thoroughly analyzed. The RCMP's dual role as a federal and community police force gives it unique jurisdictional authority and places it under different political and operational scrutiny. However, scholarship on RCMP misconduct tends to either generalize findings from other law enforcement bodies or limit its scope to individual cases, thereby ignoring the broader systemic factors at play.

Moreover, much of the existing literature focuses on North American policing from a U.S.-centric perspective. Comparative work on Canadian institutions, particularly the RCMP, is lacking. Studies like those of Silvestri (2018) or Rabe-Hemp (2008) often discuss American or British contexts, where unionization, decentralization, and community oversight models differ from the RCMP's structure.

This study contributes to the literature by focusing explicitly on the RCMP and situating its misconduct within the broader framework of state power, gendered hierarchies, and colonial legacy. By incorporating survivor testimonies, legal case analyses, and policy critiques, this research offers a nuanced understanding of the interplay between institutional design and cultural

norms in perpetuating sexual misconduct. It further provides concrete policy recommendations based on comparative insights and qualitative analysis, which may inform both academic debate and policy reform.

A comparative analysis reveals that the RCMP lags behind many of its national and international counterparts in terms of accountability, reporting mechanisms, and institutional reform. Within Canada, police services such as the Toronto Police Service (TPS) and the Vancouver Police Department (VPD) have implemented more robust internal support systems, including confidential third-party reporting tools and comprehensive anti-harassment training (Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, 2021).

The TPS, for instance, established its Sexual Violence & Harassment Action Plan in 2019, which includes victim support units, trauma-informed investigative protocols, and a clear timeline for addressing complaints. While criticisms remain, the TPS has shown a stronger commitment to transparency than the RCMP. Similarly, the VPD's Professional Standards Section operates with a clearer mandate for external review than the RCMP's internal grievance systems. Calgary Police Service (CPS) has also implemented a proactive Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) office tasked with overseeing workplace complaints and conducting regular gender equity audits.

Internationally, the U.K.'s Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) and Australia's Law Enforcement Conduct Commission (LECC) provide independent oversight with legal authority to investigate and enforce disciplinary actions. These bodies operate at arm's length from the police agencies they oversee, thus offering greater credibility and impartiality in addressing misconduct (IOPC, 2021; LECC, 2020).

In contrast, the RCMP's *Civilian Review and Complaints Commission* (CRCC) has been criticized for lacking full independence, enforcement power, and timely resolution. The Bastarache Report (2020) noted that complainants frequently encounter bureaucratic barriers, delays, and insufficient follow-up. This contributes to a lack of trust in the RCMP's ability to manage its own internal misconduct.

Culturally, the RCMP appears more resistant to gender integration and reform. According to a 2022 report by the *International Association of Women Police* (IAWP), police forces in Scandinavian countries including Norway, Sweden, and Finland have institutionalized gender-sensitive policies, robust whistleblower protections, and mentorship programs for women in law enforcement. These strategies have resulted in increased female representation in leadership roles and lower rates of reported workplace harassment.

Meanwhile, the RCMP has made only marginal progress. Although gender-based harassment training has been introduced, its inconsistent application across detachments limits its effectiveness. Moreover, the hierarchical and paramilitary nature of the RCMP stifles bottom-up reform, in contrast to more decentralized agencies where community oversight plays a larger role.

This chapter has outlined the methodological approach used to examine sexual misconduct within the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), including the rationale for employing qualitative research methods, a detailed examination of landmark legal cases, and an evaluation of internal grievance and accountability mechanisms. By focusing on lived experiences, judicial responses, and institutional policies, this research has provided a nuanced understanding of the persistent culture of harassment, abuse, and silence within Canada's national police force. Further, this study seeks to bridge these gaps by comparing reform strategies and accountability models across jurisdictions, identifying best practices that could be adapted to the Canadian context. By

analyzing how different police organizations approach misconduct from policy infrastructure and institutional culture to enforcement and review mechanisms this research provides a roadmap for meaningful, systemic reform within the RCMP.

Chapter 4: Theoretical Framework

Policing is a constructed text that is historically rooted in male privilege and expressed in cultural codes that frame modes of thinking and govern human conduct (McCormick & Visano, 1992). Moreover, policing, as a set of interrelated institutions, reproduces the core values of the dominant culture and its concomitant ideologies which promote a particularly unique location “of” and “for” women in society. In both direct and more subtle ways, the “master” culture, of which policing is derivative, conceals and reveals an array of practices that silence, differentiate and condition the subordination of women. Law and its gendered justice system reinforce the prevailing cultural exclusion of women from participating fully and meaningfully in social life.

The devaluation of women, for example, belongs to meta discourses (cultural givens) that inferiorize, alienate and indeed violate women in all aspects of their personal and social lives. It is difficult, if not impossible, for women to express themselves in the existing culture and its supportive “enframing” institutions. Instead, women encounter themselves as only echoes (Couto & Visano, 2012) as gendered hierarchies are perpetuated (Cott, 1987). Moreover, feminist theories challenge the claims of conventional scholars regarding the validity of neutrality and objectivity (Boyd and Sheehy, 1986:40). As Eichler (1985:630) articulates:

- i) knowledge has been, so far, constructed by some men for the benefit of men.
- ii) the dominant ideology, including the dominant approaches to sociology, bolsters and maintains patriarchy.
- iii) social science has so far been largely the handmaiden of sexism; and,
- iv) women and men have a different perspective on society stemming from their different positions within that society which will continue to be crucially important to a society. Women, therefore, have their own perspective that is of at least equal value- and- arguably of more value- than the corresponding male perspective on the same issue. Eichler (1985:620) explains that feminist approaches provide a critical attitude towards sexism in an effort to expose and overcome bias.

Feminist approaches, as Eichler (1985:622) describes, would include the following assumptions:

- i) Women (as well as men) are both historical actors as well as acted upon subjects as well as objects. Societies cannot be understood if we fail to understand the female experience.
- ii) Contemporary Canadian society, as well as most other societies of today and the past, are characterized- whatever their differences- by being patriarchal. Patriarchy, in turn, consists of and reinforces the social, cultural, economic and sexual oppression of women and girls.

The essential features of feminism (Cott, 1987) include an opposition to all forms of stratification based on gender, that is, an opposition to the fundamental belief that biology consigns women to an inferior status, a sense of common experiences and a purpose. Feminist perspectives identify and represent women's interests, interests judged to be insufficiently represented and accommodated within the orthodoxies of mainstream epistemologies (Couto & Visano, 2012).

According to Harding, there are seven basic assumptions concerning the differences between men's and women's experiences. The seven differences are summarized below:

- Women's different lives have been erroneously devalued and neglected as starting points for scientific research and as the generators of evidence for or against knowledge claims.
- Women are valuable "strangers", "outsiders" to the social order...women's exclusion from the design and direction of both the social order and the production of knowledge...this status is seen as an advantage.
- Women's oppression gives them fewer interests in ignorance...this is grounds for transvaluing women's differences because members of oppressed groups have fewer interests in maintaining the status quo.
- Women's perspectives are from the other side of the "battle of the sexes" that women and men engage in on a daily basis...human knowers are active agents in their learning and women's knowledge emerges through the struggles.
- Women's perspectives are from everyday life, which is best for the origins of research.
- Women's perspectives come from mediating ideological dualisms, nature versus culture, which enables us to understand how and why social and cultural phenomena have taken form.
- Women, especially women researchers, are "outsiders within"...this increases objectivity (Harding, 1991:131).

Post structural theorists have highlighted the insidious and invisible nature of control. That is, policing as law is always an authorized force, a force that justifies itself or is justified in applying itself, even if this justification may be judged from elsewhere to be unjust or unjustifiable (Derrida 1990:925). Authority signifies relations that constitute and are constituted by the dynamics of

power. The ideological and institutional mechanisms of power create authority - subject relations. Foucault (1979) notes that the micro mechanisms of power (mediated through the schools, hospitals, barracks, factories, cities, families, etc) since the late 18th century have played an increasing role in the regulation of people's bodies. This control comes not through a code of law, but through "technologies". For Foucault (1979: 187), disciplinary power is exercised through its invisibility; at the same time, it imposes on those whom it subjects a principle of compulsory visibility. In discipline, the subjects must be seen. Their visibility assures the hold of the power that is exercised over them. It is the fact of being constantly seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in her subjugation. And the examination is the technique by which power, instead of emitting the signs of potency, instead of imposing a mark on its subjects, hold them in a mechanism of objectification. In this space of domination, disciplinary power manifests potency, essentially, by arranging objects. The examination is, as it was, the ceremony of this objectification.

Understanding the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and its enduring challenges with sexual misconduct requires a critical examination of the theories that explain institutional culture and gender dynamics. At the heart of the issue lies the role of institutional culture, which refers to the deeply ingrained values, norms, rituals, and behaviors that shape an organization's identity. In police organizations, such as the RCMP, this culture is influenced by hierarchical structures, loyalty to the institution, and a shared professional identity that often prioritizes male-centered values and ideals.

Key to understanding this dynamic is the concept of hegemonic masculinity, a theory developed by R.W. Connell (2005), which posits that in male-dominated institutions, certain traits aggression, dominance, emotional stoicism are valorized while traits often associated with femininity such as empathy, care, and collaboration are devalued. The concept of hegemonic

masculinity is critical for understanding the RCMP, where male officers are often socialized to conform to an ideal of "toughness" and authority. This form of masculinity becomes entrenched within the institution, reinforcing hierarchical power structures that marginalize women and other minority groups. As a result, misconduct particularly sexual harassment and violence becomes normalized, making it difficult for victims to report and for the institution to address these issues effectively.

Further complicating this issue is the application of institutional culture theory as proposed by scholars such as Edgar Schein (2010). According to Schein, an organization's culture is transmitted through formal rituals, policies, and informal practices, and it is often resistant to change. In the case of the RCMP, these cultural mechanisms can perpetuate a climate where sexual misconduct is trivialized or ignored. This creates an environment where male-dominated values are celebrated and dissenting voices especially those of women or other marginalized groups—are silenced. The institution's focus on loyalty, hierarchy, and reputation often dissuades those who witness or experience misconduct from speaking out, ensuring that the cycle of abuse continues unchecked.

By exploring these theories, we can better understand how the RCMP's culture contributes to the perpetuation of sexual misconduct and why reforms within the institution have been slow and ineffective. The concept of hypermasculinity is particularly useful when analyzing police cultures, where exaggerated masculine traits, such as dominance, aggression, and the rejection of vulnerability, are often normalized. Hypermasculinity, as defined by Katz (1995), involves the overemphasis on traditionally male characteristics such as physical strength, dominance, and control, which are seen as essential to maintaining authority in the field of law enforcement. In the RCMP, this hypermasculine culture is a defining feature of the institution's identity. Officers are

socialized to value traits such as emotional detachment, physical toughness, and aggressive behavior, all of which are seen as integral to the "tough" image of policing.

In practice, hypermasculinity in the RCMP often leads to an environment where aggression, both physical and psychological, is normalized and valorized. This culture not only fosters a sense of camaraderie among male officers but also exacerbates gender inequalities within the organization. Women, in particular, are often marginalized, and their experiences of sexual harassment or assault are either dismissed or ignored. As hypermasculine traits like aggression and dominance are celebrated, behaviors that contribute to gender-based misconduct are often excused or overlooked. Sexual harassment becomes trivialized as part of the "brotherhood" culture that defines many police forces, where male officers often defend one another, even when misconduct occurs.

The application of hypermasculinity within the RCMP can be seen in the frequent underreporting of sexual misconduct and the failure to hold perpetrators accountable. When aggressive behaviors are accepted as part of the organizational culture, they create an atmosphere where sexual violence is normalized. This is evident in the RCMP's history of underreporting sexual harassment and the reluctance of victims to come forward due to fears of retaliation, lack of support, and a general sense of futility within the organization. Hypermasculinity thus plays a central role in the persistence of misconduct within the RCMP.

In brief, feminist criminological theories are essential to understanding how power dynamics, gender inequality, and institutionalized discrimination contribute to misconduct within law enforcement. Feminist criminology challenges traditional criminological perspectives by focusing on the ways in which gendered power relations shape criminal behavior and the functioning of law enforcement institutions. Feminist scholars argue that law enforcement

agencies, such as the RCMP, are inherently patriarchal, with male officers occupying positions of power and women frequently being marginalized.

One key concept in feminist criminology is feminist institutionalism, which examines how gendered power dynamics are embedded within the structures, practices, and policies of institutions. According to feminist institutionalists (Koskela, 2017), the RCMP's policies and organizational culture reinforce gender inequality by fostering an environment where male officers hold more power, women are often sidelined, and gender-based misconduct is either ignored or downplayed. This structural inequality makes it difficult for female officers to succeed or for victims of sexual harassment to find justice. The RCMP's culture of silence, loyalty, and hierarchical authority further perpetuates this problem by discouraging complaints and ensuring that perpetrators are rarely held accountable.

Another important feminist theory is intersectionality, introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991). Intersectionality examines how multiple forms of oppression such as gender, race, and class—interact to create unique experiences of discrimination. Within the RCMP, intersectionality is crucial for understanding how Indigenous women and women of color face even greater levels of harassment and discrimination. These women not only experience gender-based violence but are also subjected to racialized forms of discrimination that further enhances their vulnerability within the institution. Intersectional analyses reveal that the RCMP's failure to address misconduct is not just a matter of gender inequality but is also deeply rooted in racialized and colonial histories, particularly concerning the treatment of Indigenous peoples.

From a criminological perspective, feminist theories assert that the RCMP's history of institutionalized misconduct is not a series of isolated incidents but rather constitute a broader pattern of gendered violence inherent in the organization. These perspectives suggest that true

reform within the RCMP requires a fundamental shift in how the institution understands power, gender, and accountability. Changing the culture of policing will necessitate not only reforms at the policy level but also a re-evaluation of the values and norms that define the RCMP.

By applying feminist criminological perspectives to the RCMP, this study highlights the ways in which gender inequality and power imbalances shape misconduct within the force. Theories like feminist institutionalism and intersectionality offer a critical lens for understanding how the RCMP's culture perpetuates sexual misconduct and how institutional changes are essential to addressing the systemic issues at play.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Analysis

This study demonstrates the powerful effect that the police culture has on its members. The occupational culture hampers much needed reform. This was done through firstly defining the elements of a police culture, and then by examining how these elements become culturally internalised into the respective police members. A qualitative and document-based analysis of testimonies, legal proceedings, and internal institutional reports reveals three dominant themes that permeate the RCMP's internal organizational dynamics:

- (i) the normalization of sexual misconduct,
- (ii) institutional protectionism and failures of accountability; and
- (iii) the entrenchment of a hypermasculine culture.

These themes are interrelated and reinforce each other in producing an institutional environment where sexual violence is not only tolerated but institutionally enabled.

1. Normalization of Sexual Misconduct

The testimonies of survivors, as reflected in the *Bastarache Report* (2020) and corroborated by public records and class-action lawsuits, provide overwhelming evidence of normalized sexual harassment and misconduct. Former officer Janet Merlo recounted over a decade of persistent sexualized comments and degradation, culminating in severe mental health consequences including PTSD and depression (Mason, 2012). Catherine Galliford, a former RCMP spokesperson, revealed an even more disturbing pattern of sexualized hostility, claiming that sexual advances, lewd commentary, and coercive workplace dynamics were so commonplace that silence became a survival strategy (Clancy, 2015).

The routine nature of these abuses reflects what feminist scholars' term "*institutional misogyny*", that is, the systematic devaluation and exploitation of women through organizational norms (Silvestri, 2018). Many survivors reported that their complaints were minimized, dismissed, or treated as interpersonal issues rather than violations of workplace safety (Bastarache, 2020). The routine and trivialized nature of these offenses represents a collective institutional failure to distinguish between banter and coercion, normalizing gendered violence in everyday interactions.

2. Institutional Protectionism and Accountability Failures

Institutional protectionism manifests in the RCMP's systematic prioritization of its public image and internal loyalty over justice and victim support. This is evident in numerous cases where internal investigations into sexual misconduct either stalled indefinitely or led to no significant outcomes. In 2001, an officer accused of sexual assault was not thoroughly investigated until 2021, after external media scrutiny and survivor persistence forced an apology (CBC News, 2023). The force's response was reactive and delayed, revealing the RCMP's instinctive preference to protect itself over its members.

Moreover, egregious examples of *institutional betrayal* are not limited to administrative decisions but extend to frontline engagement. In 2012, an RCMP officer interrogated a young Indigenous woman who had reported sexual assault by asking if she was “turned on” during the experience, an act that exposed deep-rooted victim-blaming and cultural ignorance within the force (APTN News, 2019). This not only re-traumatized the survivor but symbolized the RCMP's broader failure to institutionalize a survivor-centered, trauma-informed approach to sexual violence.

These actions reflect a larger pattern of what Smith and Freyd (2014) call "institutional betrayal," where survivors are harmed not only by individuals but by the very institutions tasked with their protection. The internal culture of the RCMP often shames or retaliates against those who report, discouraging disclosure and reinforcing impunity (Hoffman, 2018).

3. Perpetuation of a Hypermasculine Organizational Culture

The RCMP remains a deeply masculinist institution, where traits such as aggression and dominance are valorized while empathic expressions, collaboration, and dissent are seen as weakness. This dynamic is described in Connell's (2005) theory of hegemonic masculinity, wherein men who most closely align with idealized masculine norms are rewarded with power and credibility. Within this cultural framework, women—particularly those who speak out—are punished for deviating from these norms.

Memoirs such as Sherry Lee Benson-Podolchuk's *Women Not Wanted* reveal that hypermasculine policing values lead to a culture where sexual harassment is both a method of control and a gatekeeping tool to exclude women from meaningful roles (Mason, 2018). Promotions are often linked to informal social networks dominated by men, while women are

expected to "toughen up" or remain silent if they want to succeed. The result is a system where silence becomes a condition of employment, and complicity is institutionalized through informal mentorship, evaluation, and retaliation practices.

Insights into RCMP's Institutional Culture

A close reading of class-action lawsuits, inquiry reports, and media analysis reveals several systemic characteristics that define the RCMP's internal institutional culture. These features serve to entrench misconduct and minimize accountability, maintaining a policing structure that resists meaningful reform.

■ Gender as a Structural Disadvantage

Gender inequality is not merely a demographic imbalance but a structural feature of RCMP policy and culture. Women face persistent barriers to promotion, are overrepresented in administrative or support roles, and receive harsher evaluations for the same behaviors that are praised in male officers (Silvestri, 2018; Rabe-Hemp, 2008). The Merlo-Davidson class-action lawsuit, joined by nearly 400 women, underscored how discriminatory practices are embedded in recruitment, retention, and promotion policies (Mason, 2012).

Merlo & Davidson Class Action

(Merlo and Davidson v. Her Majesty the Queen, Federal Court Action Number T-1685-16;

Merlo v Canada, 2017 FC 533)

The Merlo Davidson class action settlement concerns gender and sexual orientation-based harassment and discrimination of female RCMP members and public service employees in the workplace from 1974 to 2017. In 2017, the Federal Court approved a settlement that established a

confidential and independent Claims Process and compensation scheme overseen by former Supreme Court of Canada Justice, the Hon. Michel Bastarache, C.C., Q.C. as Independent Assessor. A total of 3,086 claims were filed between August 2017 and May 2018. The Assessor determined that 2,304 claimants were entitled to compensation under the settlement agreement, for a total of \$125.4 million in compensation payments (RCMP, Report 2021). The terms of the Settlement Agreement provide for the Independent Assessor to “draft a report that will provide an overview of [his] observations and recommendations stemming from his work in assessing claims.”

Broken Dreams Broken Lives: The Devastating Effects of Sexual Harassment on Women in the RCMP. 2021

On Dec. 2, 2020, former Supreme Court of Canada justice Michel Bastarache presented to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security his findings on sexual harassment in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), related to the Merlo-Davidson Settlement. The report, titled “Broken Dreams, Broken Lives: The Devastating Effects of Sexual Harassment on Women in the RCMP” highlights the seriousness of persistent harassment and gender-based discrimination in the RCMP. This final report concludes that the RCMP culture is “toxic” and “tolerates misogyny and homophobia at all ranks and in all provinces and territories.” While the claims covered a 40-year period, the Assessor observes that the conduct reported persisted over time and his report speaks to the culture that currently exists. The report acknowledges the positive changes that have been made in response to past reports on workplace harassment and discrimination; however, it finds that despite these efforts, the RCMP has failed to resolve this pervasive problem.

Additionally, the report sets out the treatment that claimants described to the three Assessors, including use of offensive language; discrimination in access to promotions and training; frequent incidents of sexual misconduct; and fear of reprisals if complaints were filed. LGBTQ2S women or women of Indigenous or racialized heritage were found to often be treated even more poorly. The report also addresses the impact on the lives of the claimants and their families, including loss of mental health, loss of family and connection, and personality changes.

Janet Merlo and Linda Gillis Davidson are two women who served in the RCMP. During their service, they were subjected to sexual harassment by other RCMP members. They courageously sued Canada for injuries suffered by themselves and other women who had worked for the RCMP since 1974. As a result, the Government of Canada recognized that discrimination and harassment were systemic in the RCMP and agreed to compensate thousands of women who had been subjected to misogynistic and homophobic conduct by members and employees of the RCMP. The Settlement Agreement in the Merlo Davidson class action was approved on May 30, 2017. This class action was not the first legal proceeding to raise issues of sexual harassment, and gender and sexual orientation-based discrimination in the RCMP. Indeed, these issues have been before the Courts and have been raised in Parliament. They have been the subject of internal and external reports provided to the RCMP and the Government for over 30 years

For more than 30 years there have been calls to fix sexual harassment in the RCMP. Internal and external reports have been delivered both to the RCMP and the Government of Canada outlining a toxic work environment for women and LGBTQ2S+ persons employed by the RCMP. It is well past time for the Government of Canada to take meaningful and radical action to address these issues. Sexual harassment and sexual assault not only harm the victims and their families, but also undermine the reputation of the RCMP as a policing organization. One of the key findings

of this Report is that the culture of the RCMP is toxic and tolerates misogynistic and homophobic attitudes amongst its leaders and members. This culture has resulted in incalculable damage to female members of the RCMP as well as those working for the public service. A change in the culture of the RCMP is essential. This Report concludes that change cannot come from within the RCMP but must be initiated from external sources. As the Hon. Marie Deschamps wrote in 2015 in the context of the Canadian Forces: “It is not enough to simply revise policies or to repeat the mantra of “zero tolerance”. Leaders must acknowledge that sexual misconduct is a real and serious problem for the organization, one that requires their own direct and sustained attention.” (ibid,2020:1)

The Culture of the RCMP as Toxic

The RCMP is a hierarchical para-military police organization with responsibilities in the areas of federal enforcement, forensic support, protective duties and is also responsible for the day-to-day local policing in a number of provinces. The stated values of the RCMP are Honesty, Integrity, Professionalism, Compassion, Accountability and Respect. However, the accounts that were submitted by claimants in the Merlo Davidson claims process demonstrated repeatedly how those values were undermined by the RCMP’s toxic culture which tolerates misogyny and homophobia by its members and its leaders.

Comprehensive cultural change is required. For the last 30 years issues of workplace and sexual harassment and discrimination have been brought to the attention of the Government of Canada and the RCMP through internal reports, external reports and litigation before the Courts. The measures taken in response have not, in my view, succeeded in addressing the underlying issues arising from the RCMP’s toxic culture. (2020: III)

Specific Recommendations

The Report sets out 52 recommendations grouped as follows: systemic barriers; recruitment, training, recruit field training, postings, ongoing training, human resources and staffing, maternity and parental leave and employment flexibility, grievances and discipline, mental health, promotions, leadership, specialized teams, medical examination and civilian members and public service employees.

According to the Honourable. Michel Bastarache, Chair of the Inquiry

“Ultimately, the report indicates that “there are strong reasons to doubt that the RCMP has the capacity or the will to make the changes necessary to address the toxic aspects of its culture” and that “true change can only take hold in the RCMP if independent external pressure is brought to bear on it.” A great number of important issues were highlighted by the claims I reviewed and the claimants I spoke with. Each of these issues has contributed, in a way, to the perpetuation of gender or sexual orientation-based harassment and discrimination in the RCMP. I feel it is important to address these issues that were described to me by multiple claimants. These issues are systemic barriers, recruitment, training at Depot, recruit field training, postings, ongoing training, human resources and staffing, maternity and parental leave, employment flexibility, grievances and discipline, mental health, promotions, leadership, specialized teams and medical examinations abuse. I am of the opinion that the RCMP should undertake a review of its policies and programmes with a view to identifying and resolving issues that perpetuate systemic barriers to women and LGBTQ2S+ women in the RCMP... All of the Assessors were told stories of claimants being removed from courses or not allowed to go on courses *as a form of reprisal for not agreeing to a sexual relationship with a supervisor, or for making a complaint about*

harassment. Claimants told stories of asking for a course for years, only to see it given to a much junior male member. By refusing women training, men had a way in which to *'keep them in their place'*. In some instances, this was the explicit stated intent, in others it was simply a by-product of unconscious bias and favouritism... The RCMP's stated core values are honesty, integrity, professionalism, compassion, accountability and respect. These are the values that should underpin the culture of the RCMP. Sadly, that is not what I heard. The lack of respect, integrity, compassion and accountability that was related by claimants to me and the other Assessors directly contradicts these stated values. Based on the 3,086 claims I have read and the 644 interviews that we (I and the two other Assessors) conducted, I have concluded that the RCMP is imbued *with a toxic culture that tolerates misogyny and homophobia within its ranks and leadership*. This is very different from the image that most Canadians have of the RCMP and its culture which is exemplified by fictional (white male) characters such as Dudley Do Right. *The culture of the RCMP portrayed by the claimants as one in which sexism, homophobia, gossip and backbiting; reprisals for rocking the boat and rumour-mongering flourish...* the Hon. Marie Deschamps describes culture as: "...the ways in which, over time, people who work or live within a particular organizational and institutional setting develop a shared set of understandings which allow them to interpret and act upon the world around them." A similar definition was set out by Linda Duxbury in her 2007 report written in support of the Brown Task Force which states: "In simple terms, organizational culture is the pattern of shared values and beliefs that lead to certain norms of behaviour. It is "the way we do it around here." It is the behavioural norms of the organization that a newcomer to the organization would

quickly notice. It is “what and how we do things in this organization in order to succeed (2020: 45-57). [emphases added]

Re. Offensive language

Honourable Michel Bastarache, Chair of the Inquiry elaborates:

“Claimants told the Assessors that male RCMP members would call women sickening and humiliating names like “split-tail, “cunt, “canoe-licker, “bitch”, “ball-breaker”, “fresh meat”, “beaver tails”, “WREN (wasted regimental number)”. If a woman happened to also be Indigenous, she was called a “squaw”, “smoked meat”, etc” (ibid).

Re Sexual Misconduct

Honourable Michel Bastarache, Chair of the Inquiry reports:

“Sexual misconduct in the RCMP appears to occur with a surprising frequency. The Assessors were told of drunk male members at Regimental dinners, standing on the table and waving their penises at the women; sexual assaults when members are out of town on courses and staying at hotels were frequent. In Surrey, the largest detachment in Canada, there is an RCMP building called ‘The White House’ where members would go to drink. A lot of sexual activity took place there, some consensual, some not. Apparently, the question, ‘Do you want to go downstairs to play pool?’ is code for ‘do you want to give me a blow job?’ Women told the Assessors stories of being sexually propositioned by male members at a detachment and being called “fresh meat” (it was worse at Depot). In some instances, the Assessors were told that male members would have a betting pool for who was going to sleep with a new woman member first (ibid, 45-55).

Further,

“When women did get to go on training, they were at times subjected to sexual advances and or sexual assault in hotels or training facilities both by fellow trainees and instructors. The claimants also disclosed incidents of hazing that included various forms of sexual activity that was required to be performed before the woman member would be accepted by the group. Bullying was frequently the norm; giving in to requests for sexual favours was expected by the male members. A surprising number of women reported that they were stalked by fellow members who were seeking a sexual relationship. Text messages, telephone calls, individuals standing outside their house at night, patrol cars passing frequently and taking down the license plates on cars in their driveways. This negative conduct towards women appears to have been heightened in several specialized areas like undercover operations, the TAC Team, the Dog Handling Team, or the Musical Ride.”

RCMP Response (Report, 2021

The response acknowledges that current efforts, being advanced under Vision 150, the RCMP’s plan for modernization and culture change, are aligned with the recommendations in the Independent Assessor's final report. Efforts to date include:

Continuous improvements to harassment resolution (e.g., centralized complaint intake, additional legal training to decision-makers, fully externalized the investigation of all sexual harassment complaints).

Significant improvements to RCMP governance and decision-making (e.g., establishment of the external Management Advisory Board; gender parity on the Senior Executive Committee).

Commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion (e.g, integration of Gender-based Analysis+ [GBA+] across the organization; development of the RCMP Guide to Supporting Transgender, Non-Binary and Two-Spirit Employees). Enhancements to leadership development (e.g., launch of the Foundations of Leadership course in 2019 providing a leadership continuum from cadet to executive).

The RCMP response acknowledges the recommendations within the final report and commits to four key priority areas moving forward:

- Strengthening harassment prevention and trusted resolution: e.g., a new independent, civilian-staffed Independent Centre for Harassment Resolution, outside the chain of command and reporting to the Chief Administrative Officer.
- Addressing systemic barriers through a culture of accountability, equity and inclusion: e.g., reviewing RCMP core values; identifying, preventing and removing barriers from RCMP policies, programs and operations through the use of GBA+; a new RCMP Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy; a new Well-Being Strategy; and exploring ways to mitigate barriers linked to maternity/parental leave.
- Recruitment and onboarding: e.g., recruitment modernization plan, including identifying new screening tools that promote diversity and inclusion; examining large-scale changes to Depot; and continuing to review the Cadet Training Program, including the impacts of the military aspects of its training environment and curriculum.
- Leadership development and training: e.g., integration of Character Leadership in recruitment, training and promotion processes; training has been launched on unconscious bias, and cultural awareness and humility, and new mandatory anti-racism training will be

developed with external experts; a GBA+ will be conducted on the allocation of employee training.

Response of women affected

When asked to make suggestions, the claimants often focused on leadership and accountability of the leadership. Some, however, had no suggestions. They did not think it was possible for the RCMP to change or fix itself. Others suggested that it was time to replace the RCMP with a new federal policing agency with a more restrictive mandate. This is some of what we heard from the women (ibid, 56):

- *There needs to be a dedicated plan on how to modernize the RCMP. This will require secure funding and that leadership be held accountable for the results.*
- *The RCMP needs to implement earlier and more thorough management and leadership training. It needs to be more structured and assist not just those members who are being promoted, but should help throughout the career of a member.*
- *There must be accountability of managers and harassers; this was often repeated by claimants.*
- *We were told that an independent oversight body is needed, along with a means for members to bring problems of harassment to the attention of the organization without fearing retaliation.*
- *A suggestion was made to amend the RCMP Act to better set out the Mission and Values of the RCMP.*
- *RCMP members should be required to re-familiarize themselves with the Code of Conduct each time they are promoted and be required to sign it each time they change rank.*
- *The RCMP must discipline those who do nothing after observing harassment.*

- *There needs to be a better selection of senior officers to limit the impact of the Old Boys' club. The top echelons of the RCMP are "old boys" — they have helped each other out to get where they are, and they protect each other. That needs to be wiped out and start from scratch.*
- *Leaders must be willing to make unpopular decisions to address the cultural issues at play that contribute to harassment and discrimination.*
- *Women must be put in operational leadership roles and not limited to "pink ghettos" like human resources, etc.*
- *There needs to be closer supervision of smaller detachments by senior management, including spot audits and random visits.*
- *Supervisors require management training, people in positions of management must be adequately screened to ensure competence and the ability to manage.*
- *The RCMP oath requires members to swear fealty to the RCMP and not to the Crown or Canada. This should be changed.*
- *One claimant compared the RCMP to a hockey game without a penalty box.*
- *Culture values "big talkers" and those without empathy; this should be addressed, and more voices listened to.*
- *The RCMP should acknowledge male champions who promote the role of women in the RCMP.*
- *The RCMP needs to develop a bottom led collaborative model of policing as opposed to the existing hierarchical system. Hierarchical structure impedes good leadership.*
- *There is a need to capture data in relation to problematic areas and analyze it to fully understand the changes required.*

- *The creation of a civilian board of management is a positive step.*
- *The abuse of power must be better understood by members and those who do it, must be sanctioned.*

Police Response

The RCMP response to the final report was posted its external website on November 19, 2020. Building on efforts to date under *the RCMP's Vision 150* modernization plan, the RCMP response commits to a holistic approach to culture change and an RCMP free of violence, harassment and discrimination. The RCMP response acknowledges the recommendations, which cross the above four key areas, many of which are already underway as part of a long-term approach to a healthy and inclusive workplace. Most notably, the issue of harassment prevention and resolution has led to the creation of a new Independent Centre for Harassment Resolution (ICHR), a civilian-staffed harassment prevention and resolution regime, outside the chain of command and reporting to the Chief Administrative Officer will ensure employees have access to a trusted, consistent process that is accessible, timely and accountable. Launched in June 2021, fully operational in 2022, the ICHR today has 29 external investigators who provide important information to help the RCMP prevent workplace harassment and violence to improve the workplace (RCMP,2021).

In 2017, a new unit was established to act as centralized support for the RCMP in the advancement of gender equality, diversity, inclusion and cultural transformation objectives. This unit is also overseeing the implementation of Gender-Based Analysis+ competencies across the organization, to ensure that all RCMP internal policies and external operations are informed by the systematic consideration of gender and diversity. Two new executive-level positions were created

to lead this unit, including a new Senior Executive Committee member and a subject matter expert on gender and diversity analysis.

Civilian Review and Complaints Commission (CRCC)

The CRCC conducted a review of the RCMP's policies and procedures on workplace harassment and investigated whether the recommendations from the CRCC's 2013 Public Interest Investigation Report into Issues of Workplace Harassment within the RCMP were effectively implemented. The CRCC concluded that the RCMP did not adequately implement the 2013 recommendations and confirmed that harassment and bullying continue to be a serious problem. Consequently, ten additional recommendations to address harassment were proposed in the 2017 report. The recommendations focused on improving processes, clarifying definitions and enhancing training.

Fraser Report

In November 2015, four women with lawsuits alleging harassment during their time at the RCMP wrote an open letter to the Prime Minister and all Liberal Senators and Members of Parliament requesting that they prevent the RCMP from discharging them prior to the conclusion of their legal proceedings. The Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness committed to reviewing these cases and appointed former Auditor General Sheila Fraser to review the cases. The objective was to review how harassment policies, procedures and the legislative framework were applied by the RCMP, to identify gaps and make recommendations. The review resulted in three recommendations: strengthen the governance framework and consider the creation of a civilian board to oversee organizational changes; establish an independent harassment investigation process; and conduct an independent review of the RCMP's Health Services and the grievance pro

In May 2017, the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission (CRCC) released its Report on Workplace Harassment in the RCMP coinciding with the release of the Review of Four Cases of Civil Litigation Against the RCMP on Workplace Harassment — Report to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness by Sheila Fraser (the Fraser Report). The RCMP continues to undertake efforts to address the findings of these reports.

Silencing and Retaliation Mechanisms

Catherine Galliford's experience after reporting harassment is emblematic of the RCMP's retaliatory tactics. Rather than investigating her claims transparently, she was labeled a problem, placed on medical leave, and eventually isolated from her team (Clancy, 2015). Similar patterns have emerged in other cases, where whistleblowers faced demotions, non-promotions, or forced transfers. Such punitive responses not only silence current victims but dissuade others from coming forward (Hoffman, 2018; Lynch, 2018).

Silence and the secrecy of violence

In this chapter we detailed various manifestations of gender harassment in the work environment of criminal justice system. According to Heath Rawlings (2004), reform in the legal profession is incredibly slow. Typically, when the Canadian Bar Association voted overwhelmingly to strike down a motion that would have forbidden sex between a lawyer and client, many lawyers passionately defended what many professional associations in Ontario already know: the association governing a certain profession can never really know what goes on in the bedrooms of its professionals. Despite limited progress, there are egregious illustrations of a misogynistic culture that dominates and becomes common sense even among the nation's leading law makers.

For example, stereotypes articulating the inferiority of women prevent women from achieving equity in the workplace.

Organizational Loyalty Over Public Accountability

The RCMP has repeatedly prioritized internal solidarity and institutional image over transparency and accountability. Even when internal investigations confirm misconduct, disciplinary actions are often minimized, delayed, or circumvented through quiet transfers (Office of the Auditor General, 2020). This practice sustains what Foucault (1977) would describe as a disciplinary institution that controls bodies through secrecy and hierarchy, rather than fairness and justice.

The attitudes and behaviour of officers within the criminal justice system reflect values of their respective reactive institutions which tend to demonstrate very little appreciation of how privilege influences their misogyny. The concept of misogyny exists as a discursal practice that is socially or relationally situated. The dominant culture shapes situationally relevant sexual codes that frame decision points or procedural judgements. Many of these codes exist within the occupational / institutional culture which organizes and recognizes a constellation of values that are specific to the requisite occupational activities. A certain pathology requires their loyalty to be aligned with the values of the “old boys” network and the logic of deference to each other thereby protecting their respective privileges. First, the collegium exerts influence in perpetuating a sense of “we-ness” replete with norms, roles and attitudes. This culture provides a coherent narrative of identities and ensures a social recognition of these identities and a sense of “tribal or clan togetherness and belongingness” that places a primacy on similarities or shared attributes around which group members coalesce. A collective wisdom emerges that serves to guide and validate perspectives and activities; normative self serving and self-important attributes and images emerge to essentialize identity. Acculturation, that is, the process of learning the “ways and means” (coping strategies:

accommodation and resistance) from collegial involvement, offers a collective solution to actual and perceived strains and values a symbolic framework for the development and maintenance of a collective identity as well as individual self-esteem.

Misogyny is legitimated by myths that are perpetuated and accepted as common sense in the dominant culture. But from time to time, the extent of this hate exposed by the media is so deep and pervasive that officials feel called upon to provide “explanations”. Disavowal of deviance ranges from outright denial that it exists to assertion that the actions are only exceptions, or only technically illegal, to outright moral justification of the acts as examples of “noble purpose” in the organization, that is, as “the overzealous pursuit of duty.” Disavowal may also take the form of language manipulation - unlawful acts become “wrongdoings” or “indiscretions.” If these forms of disavowal and neutralization fail, the organization may revert to demonology, invoking a variety of stigmatized “enemies” – feminists as “subversives. A public sacrifice of one or more officials as sexist “bad apples” not the barrel nor the orchard, highlights the individual not the systemic nature of abuse. The legal system refuses to recognize the organizational structuring of the “sexist system” and instead castigates guilty individuals. The silence and secrecy of violence that cover up so much misogyny must be penetrated and exposed as modalities of cultural pathologies and contradictions in social fracture. The confluence of contradictions, ambiguities and metaphors provides a much-needed contingent sense of institutional relations that evades thinking. The dangerous contradictions advanced with impunity by institutions of law must be exposed. As Audrey Lorde and Albert Einstein respectively observed “the master’s tools will not dismantle the master’s house” and “no problem can be solved from the same consciousness that created it”.

Symbolic Compliance with Reform

While the RCMP has introduced various training modules on gender sensitivity and anti-harassment practices, these initiatives are inconsistently implemented and largely symbolic. Meyer (2019) found that gender equity committees often lack power, legitimacy, and adequate resources. Training programs are frequently optional, poorly evaluated, or led by internal officers rather than independent experts. The disconnect between policy and practice means that reforms serve more as public relations efforts than transformative interventions.

Impact of Sexual Misconduct on Officers and the Public

The consequences of unchecked sexual misconduct in the RCMP extend well beyond individual cases; they impact institutional legitimacy, officer retention, and public trust.

1. Psychological and Professional Harm to Female Officers

Women who experience sexual misconduct often endure long-term psychological harm, including anxiety, depression, PTSD, and suicidal ideation. These mental health impacts are compounded by professional marginalization—denied promotions, damaged reputations, and isolation from support networks. Many, like Benson-Podolchuk, ultimately leave the force, leading to the loss of highly trained personnel and further cementing male-dominated leadership structures (Mason, 2018).

2. Erosion of Public Trust

Public confidence in the RCMP has deteriorated with each incident of poorly handled misconduct. The media outcry following the 2012 interrogation of the Indigenous teen illustrates how systemic failures alienate marginalized communities and foster skepticism toward law enforcement (APTN

News, 2019). These perceptions reduce public cooperation, hinder community policing efforts, and foster cycles of distrust and disengagement.

3. Institutional Legitimacy Crisis

As these issues persist, the RCMP faces a legitimacy crisis. The repeated failure to address misconduct effectively undermines the force's credibility and erodes its capacity to serve as a just and protective institution. Increasingly, scholars, journalists, and community leaders question whether the RCMP is capable of reform from within or whether more radical structural interventions are necessary (Bastarache, 2020; Smith, 2020).

The institutional agenda of policing demands that female police officers conform to the male ideology. When female police officers comply to the shared social codes, they tend to mask the patriarchal tradition that is embedded. Bastarache's Report concluded that change cannot come from within the RCMP but must be initiated from external sources. As the Hon. Marie Deschamps wrote in 2015 in the context of the Canadian Forces: "It is not enough to simply revise policies or to repeat the mantra of "zero tolerance" policing.

Denial and Disavowal

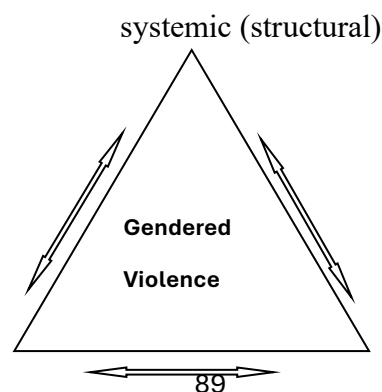
Disavowal of organizational misconduct ranges from outright denial that it exists to assertion that the actions are only exceptions. Disavowal may also take the form of language manipulation - unlawful acts become "wrongdoings" or "indiscretions." If these forms of disavowal and neutralization fail, the organization may revert to a form of victim blaming. Organizations have structural advantages in disavowing misconduct: large and diverse police bureaucracies may divert attention from an exposed sector to one where some legitimacy and even honor can be claimed for current official activities. Failing all other efforts to disavow deviance,

the organization whose continued survival relies heavily on a covert pattern of official misconduct will attempt to prevent full public disclosure. A public sacrifice of one or more officials as “bad apples” not the barrel nor the orchard, highlights the individual not the systemic nature of abuse.

This dissertation bears immeasurably on the way in which the RCMP conceive of sexual violence from its origins, or history, nature, content, justification and differential impact of law, dominant culture and occupational culture. Sexual violence must be understood relationally and contextually to better appreciate why and how the RCMP failed woefully in advancing gender equity. Relationally, women’s rights as currently construed is about politics, economics and law.

Instead, the study of violence needs to directly confront the basis of social order, the nature of institutions and occupational cultures. *The quality of this social order (violence) shapes and is shaped by the nature of the institution (formal institutional roles / rules and the subterranean values of the police occupational culture).*

Clearly, culture mediates the relationship between policing (law) and justice (equality). Violence against women is attributable to the individual (situational contexts), institutional (organizational roles / norms and the occupational culture) and to structural/ systemic (dominant culture, law, history, political economy)



organizational (institutional)

individual (interactional)

Figure 1 Policing (Law) Culture-Policing-Inequality

Chapter 6. Conclusions

Ethical Considerations

Ethical integrity is a critical element in any research project, particularly when the study explores sensitive and personal topics. In the case of this research on sexual misconduct within the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), the ethical considerations take on heightened importance, given the deeply traumatic experiences that the study discusses. The research draws on publicly available materials, such as media reports, case law, and documented interviews with RCMP officers, survivors, and experts. However, the ethical challenges surrounding this research remain significant, as the information involves the personal and professional lives of individuals.

This study relies exclusively on publicly available data—such as news reports, publicly accessible interviews, and case files. Nonetheless, researchers cannot be absolved of ethical responsibility. Researchers must still consider how the evidence gathered is used and ensure that it does not re-traumatize or harm individuals. This includes ensuring that the evidence presented

does not perpetuate victim-blaming narratives, misinterpret experiences, or sensationalize the subject matter (Starr & Duffy, 2019).

Even though this research does not involve direct interaction with participants, power imbalances remain an important ethical consideration. In studies dealing with sexual misconduct or other sensitive subjects, power dynamics between researchers and participants can influence how the information is presented. Even in secondary data analysis, the researcher must remain mindful of these dynamics. For example, media coverage of sexual misconduct cases often emphasizes certain perspectives while minimizing others, leading to distorted portrayals of victims, survivors, and perpetrators.

In line with ethical guidelines, this research consciously avoids reinforcing harmful stereotypes or ideologies by presenting a balanced view of the issue. This balance aims to amplify the voices of marginalized individuals and hold the institution accountable, while not vilifying individual officers who may have been complicit in or affected by the misconduct.

Although the research does not directly interview individuals or survivors, it is crucial to note that the use of publicly available material still demands a trauma-informed approach. Trauma-informed research prioritizes safety, respect, and sensitivity, ensuring that participants' potential re-traumatization is avoided at all costs. This approach is particularly important when dealing with topics such as sexual violence, harassment, and institutional abuse (Sullivan & Campbell, 2020).

The research acknowledges the importance of framing sensitive data in ways that prioritize survivor dignity and autonomy. Content is presented in a non-graphic, factual manner, and effort was made to avoid sensationalizing or trivializing survivors' experiences.

Maintaining Privacy and Anonymity

Although no direct interviews or interactions were conducted, safeguarding the privacy of the individuals whose experiences are discussed remains a core ethical concern. For example, any specific references to individuals, such as the names of officers involved in cases of sexual misconduct, were omitted unless these details were already made publicly available through media coverage or legal documents. In cases where individuals are named in publicly accessible sources, the research focused on the context of the information rather than emphasizing personal details, ensuring that individuals' privacy was maintained to the greatest extent possible.

In some instances, pseudonyms were used for individuals whose identities were not readily known, and all personally identifiable information was removed or generalized. For example, instead of detailing an individual's job position or unit within the RCMP, the focus was shifted to the broader institutional issues, such as organizational culture, systemic sexism, and policies that enable or fail to address misconduct. This ensures that the research adheres to ethical standards of anonymity and confidentiality (Wiles et al., 2008).

While no direct interviews with survivors or officers were conducted, the nature of the research topic requires that the material be presented in a manner that avoids exacerbating harm. Efforts were made to avoid including graphic or distressing details of the misconduct itself. Instead, the research focuses on systemic failures within the RCMP, such as the institution's culture of hypermasculinity and lack of proper accountability. This framing allows the research to address important systemic issues while respecting the dignity of those who have suffered as a result of misconduct.

Academic Contributions

This dissertation makes a significant, interdisciplinary contribution to criminology and policing studies by advancing scholarly understanding of institutional sexual misconduct, particularly through the lens of gendered power structures, hypermasculinity, and the resistance of institutions like the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) to meaningful reform. While police misconduct has been an area of sustained scholarly interest, the literature has often neglected the profound cultural and organizational factors that underpin systemic abuse, especially in institutions as influential as the RCMP. By integrating feminist criminology, institutional theory, and intersectionality, this research presents a critical re-theorization of misconduct in law enforcement contexts, providing a deeper understanding of the forces that perpetuate such behaviors.

A core aim of this dissertation is to critique the dominant frameworks used to understand police misconduct. These conventional approaches, which often emphasize individual behavior, psychological predispositions, or isolated policy failures, fall short of addressing the deeply institutionalized nature of misconduct within law enforcement. This study shifts the focus from deviant individuals to deviant institutions, revealing how sexual misconduct in the RCMP is not an isolated occurrence but rather a systemic feature of its organizational culture. By examining survivor testimonies, legal outcomes, and the persistence of policy failures, the research establishes that misconduct is a function of the broader institutional dynamics, rather than a series of individual aberrations.

The theoretical underpinnings of this analysis draw heavily on Connell's (2005) theory of hegemonic masculinity. In the RCMP, hegemonic masculinity is evident in the valorization of aggression, emotional stoicism, and dominance—qualities that are not only encouraged but celebrated. These values permeate the institution, being embedded in training protocols, everyday

interactions, and promotion criteria. The result is a culture where non-masculine traits, such as emotional vulnerability, empathy, and collaboration, are marginalized. This research contributes new insights into how hegemonic masculinity is structurally reinforced through mechanisms like performance evaluations, promotion ladders, and informal peer networks that discourage dissent and the reporting of misconduct (Brubaker, 2017).

In addition to examining hegemonic masculinity, this dissertation expands on Edgar Schein's (2010) institutional culture theory, highlighting how organizational norms, symbols, and rituals act as reinforcing mechanisms for toxic subcultures. Symbolic artifacts, such as memorials to historically all-male divisions or commemorations of past heroic feats, serve to align officers with the dominant masculinity-focused culture. Similarly, informal rituals—such as hazing or initiation practices for new recruits play a crucial role in socializing individuals into the ranks, ensuring that deviant cultural norms continue to be reproduced across generations (Silvestri, 2018). These practices form a self-perpetuating cycle that reinforces the status quo, creating an environment where reform is not only difficult but often actively resisted.

Moreover, this research applies feminist institutionalism to the study of policing. Feminist scholars, including Krook and Mackay (2011), argue that institutions are inherently gendered and that power asymmetries within these structures favor masculine norms while marginalizing women. This dissertation applies that framework to the RCMP, showing how formal policies of equality are often undermined by informal institutional practices such as discretionary decision-making and patronage systems. These systems reinforce gender hierarchies, making it difficult for women to challenge the status quo, whether in terms of leadership opportunities, fair treatment, or the ability to file grievances without facing retaliation.

Further, the dissertation incorporates an intersectional lens (Crenshaw, 1991) to provide a more nuanced understanding of how multiple identities intersect within the RCMP. Indigenous and racialized women within the force face a compounded burden of both gendered and racialized oppression. These officers experience not only misogyny but also structural racism and cultural tokenism, while simultaneously contending with the historical legacies of colonial policing. As agents of the state, these women often find themselves at the intersection of being part of an institution that has historically oppressed their communities. This dual burden creates additional barriers to professional success and personal safety within the RCMP, with some women navigating a complex terrain of loyalty to both their cultural heritage and the institution they serve (Canadian Legal Monitor, 2023).

By blending these theoretical approaches hegemonic masculinity, institutional culture, feminist institutionalism, and intersectionality this dissertation offers a richer and more comprehensive understanding of misconduct in policing. It moves beyond the traditional focus on individual misconduct and emphasizes how policing institutions themselves through their design, culture, and power structures perpetuate harm and protect perpetrators.

Bridging Theory and Empirical Practice

A critical contribution of this work is the integration of theory with empirical research. Many theoretical analyses of law enforcement have been critiqued for being overly abstract, disconnected from the practical realities of policing. This dissertation counters that criticism by grounding its theoretical findings in real-world data drawn from high-profile legal cases, government inquiries, and survivor narratives. This empirical foundation not only strengthens the theoretical analysis but also makes the findings more applicable to the ongoing debates surrounding law enforcement reform.

The concept of institutional betrayal, as defined by Smith and Freyd (2014), is a key example of this synthesis. Through survivor testimonies, this study illustrates how the RCMP's internal reporting mechanisms retraumatize victims of misconduct. Rather than offering protection or support, these systems often mirror the abusive behavior, resulting in career stagnation, isolation, and in some cases, forced resignation. These firsthand accounts confirm that the RCMP's formal complaint systems do not merely fail to deliver justice they actively reproduce harm, thereby validating claims of institutional betrayal.

The dissertation also extends Rabe-Hemp's (2008) research on the gendered barriers to leadership within policing organizations. By demonstrating how informal evaluative criteria within the RCMP favor stereotypically masculine leadership styles such as assertiveness, command presence, and emotional detachment this work contributes to the understanding of gendered barriers to career advancement within law enforcement. Women officers, particularly those who do not conform to these leadership norms, are often overlooked for promotion or are dismissed as "unfit" for policing, especially when they bring attention to issues of misconduct.

Practical Implications for Law Enforcement Studies

Beyond its theoretical contributions, this dissertation also holds practical implications for law enforcement scholarship and policy reform. It critically examines the RCMP's internal efforts at reform, such as the 2019 Gender and Harassment Advisory Committees, and highlights how these bodies lack the necessary enforcement power to effect real change. Furthermore, many of the individuals appointed to these committees are internal personnel who may have a vested interest in preserving the status quo, thereby undermining the legitimacy and effectiveness of these reforms (Meyer, 2019).

The dissertation also proposes an institutional model for reform, drawing on international best practices. By examining oversight bodies such as the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) in the United Kingdom and the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission (LECC) in Australia, this study offers a roadmap for enhancing transparency and mitigating internal bias in the RCMP. This model calls for the creation of a national Civilian Oversight Board with the power to enforce disciplinary actions, subpoena records, and compel testimony. Such a board would operate independently from the RCMP, ensuring that accountability measures are not compromised by internal institutional pressures.

Furthermore, the research introduces a comprehensive framework for gender-responsive institutional transformation within the RCMP. Key recommendations include the implementation of mandatory intersectional gender audits for all RCMP divisions, the inclusion of trauma-informed professionals in misconduct investigations, and public reporting on gender and racial disparities in promotions, disciplinary actions, and complaint outcomes. These measures would promote greater transparency, accountability, and fairness, and would help ensure that the RCMP is better equipped to handle gendered violence within the force.

Finally, this dissertation lays the groundwork for future research in criminology, gender studies, and policing. Scholars can expand upon the findings by conducting longitudinal studies on the effectiveness of reforms, exploring regional differences in RCMP culture, or comparing the RCMP's experiences with those of other international police agencies. The study's methodological design, based on critical qualitative inquiry, provides a valuable framework for future research that seeks to interrogate the intersection of culture, power, and policy within law enforcement institutions.

A systemic sexual misconduct in the RCMP cannot be understood without a rigorous analysis of gender and power. In doing so, it contributes to feminist criminology, critical institutional theory, and intersectionality by deepening our understanding of how male-dominated institutions reproduce harm, marginalize dissenting voices, and fail to hold perpetrators accountable. This section critically evaluates the gendered nature of policing culture, explores institutional failures in the RCMP, and offers insights for reshaping power structures to support inclusion and accountability.

Gendered Perspectives in Police Culture

Policing remains one of the most male-dominated professions in Canada. In 2022, women accounted for only 22.7% of RCMP regular members, and far fewer hold senior or leadership positions (Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, 2021). This gender imbalance is not merely a reflection of recruitment challenges it is symptomatic of deeper structural exclusions embedded in the institutional fabric of the RCMP.

Feminist criminologists have long argued that policing institutions are structured around masculinist ideals that equate effectiveness with aggression, control, and physical dominance (Heidensohn, 1992; Silvestri, 2018). These traits are embedded in both formal policies and informal practices, shaping hiring criteria, promotion processes, and day-to-day interactions on the job. Officers who fail to conform particularly women, LGBTQ+ members, and racialized individuals are often ostracized or disciplined through unofficial channels such as peer harassment, social isolation, or unfavorable transfers (Rabe-Hemp, 2008; Meyer, 2019).

This study documents how these informal sanctions function as a mechanism of cultural control, ensuring conformity and suppressing dissent. Women who speak out about misconduct often find themselves accused of being “too emotional,” “not team players,” or “disruptive,” echoing tropes commonly used to silence marginalized voices in patriarchal institutions (Silvestri, 2018; Brubaker, 2017).

Gendered power dynamics within the RCMP manifest through language, humor, and social bonding rituals that reinforce male dominance. Survivor testimonies from the Merlo-Davidson and Bastarache class actions reveal how sexualized jokes, demeaning nicknames, and locker-room banter were used not only to demean women but to test their conformity to masculine norms (Bastarache, 2020). Those who objected were often retaliated against, while those who endured were seen as “fitting in.” This normalization of misogynistic behavior reinforces a toxic organizational identity and discourages efforts at reform.

Intersectional Marginalization: Race, Indigeneity, and Gender

Intersectionality provides a critical lens for analyzing the experiences of officers who face multiple forms of marginalization. Black, Indigenous, and racialized women in the RCMP contend not only with gender discrimination but with structural racism, settler-colonial dynamics, and institutional neglect. This study builds on the foundational work of Crenshaw (1991) by illustrating how race and gender converge in the policing context to create unique forms of institutional violence.

For example, Indigenous women in the RCMP have reported being tokenized in outreach programs while simultaneously facing discrimination from colleagues who view them as “diversity hires” (Canadian Legal Monitor, 2023). They are often called upon to participate in ceremonial

roles or community engagements while being excluded from decision-making spaces. This dual positioning symbolically included but structurally excluded reinforces colonial hierarchies within the institution (Razack, 2015).

Additionally, the RCMP's role in enforcing colonial law exacerbates tensions for Indigenous officers, who often find themselves torn between institutional loyalty and community accountability. As one officer interviewed in the Bastarache Report stated, "I felt like I was betraying my own people every time I put on the uniform" (Bastarache, 2020, p. 87). These tensions are rarely acknowledged in RCMP policy documents, reflecting a broader institutional refusal to grapple with the colonial roots of Canadian policing.

The dissertation also documents similar experiences among LGBTQ+ officers, who face both overt discrimination and subtle forms of exclusion. Transgender officers, for instance, report being denied access to appropriate facilities, having their pronouns disrespected, or being misgendered in official reports (UNODC, 2019). These daily microaggressions erode trust and reinforce the sense that the institution is not built for or safe for diverse identities.

Power and Institutional Failures

Central to the reproduction of gendered harm in the RCMP is the distribution and exercise of institutional power. Drawing on Foucault's (1977) theories of surveillance and disciplinary regimes, this study shows how power in the RCMP is not only centralized but deeply embedded in bureaucratic structures that prioritize institutional reputation over justice.

One of the most glaring examples of institutional failure is the RCMP's internal reporting system. Despite the existence of formal complaint procedures, officers who file grievances often face retaliation. This includes stalled promotions, forced relocations, and social ostracism—forms of

institutional punishment that are difficult to trace but widely understood within the organization (Hoffman, 2018; Lynch, 2018). These forms of discipline operate not only through official channels but through informal networks of influence and communication.

Investigations into misconduct are often conducted by senior officers within the same division as the accused, creating a conflict of interest that undermines the credibility of the process. Even when complaints are substantiated, disciplinary actions are inconsistently applied, and perpetrators often receive minor sanctions or are quietly transferred rather than dismissed (Office of the Auditor General, 2020). This pattern of impunity sends a clear message to survivors: the institution will not protect you.

The concept of “institutional betrayal,” first introduced by Smith and Freyd (2014), is particularly relevant here. Institutional betrayal occurs when trusted institutions fail to protect their members from harm or respond inadequately to wrongdoing. In the RCMP, this betrayal is not only widespread but structural, manifesting in a bureaucratic culture that values loyalty and image over justice and accountability.

Reimagining Power: Toward Transformative Change

To address these failures, this study advocates for a reimagining of institutional power within law enforcement. Rather than focusing solely on individual bad actors, it emphasizes the need to restructure power hierarchies, democratize decision-making, and redistribute authority in ways that prioritize survivor safety and institutional accountability.

Key recommendations include:

- Decentralizing Complaint Oversight: Establish independent complaint mechanisms outside of RCMP command structures to reduce bias and conflict of interest (IOPC, 2021).

- Democratizing Leadership: Incorporate peer nominations, 360-degree feedback, and community input into the selection of RCMP leadership roles.
- Building Survivor-Led Committees: Empower survivors of misconduct to participate in oversight, training development, and policy reform, thereby ensuring that reforms reflect lived experiences and needs (Canadian Women’s Foundation, 2022).
- Embedding Cultural Change Agents: Appoint equity officers with enforcement power in every division to oversee implementation of gender and anti-discrimination policies.

These measures are not only aspirational they are achievable. International models, such as the LECC in New South Wales and the Police Conduct Oversight Commission in Minneapolis, demonstrate the effectiveness of independent oversight and survivor-centered reform (LECC, 2020; Smith, 2020). Adapting these practices to the RCMP requires political will, community engagement, and a fundamental shift in institutional priorities.

Policy Recommendations for Addressing RCMP Misconduct

This section outlines a multi-faceted and integrated policy agenda designed to address the root causes of sexual misconduct in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). Based on the findings of this research, it is clear that effective change requires more than symbolic reform it requires comprehensive structural realignment, cultural transformation through education, and robust mechanisms of external oversight. These recommendations are informed by survivor testimony, empirical research, international best practices, and existing gaps identified in RCMP internal frameworks.

Structural Policy Reform

Structural reform is necessary to correct embedded institutional failures. While the RCMP has made surface-level policy adjustments over the past decade, these efforts have largely been ineffectual due to the absence of enforcement power, internal bias, and inconsistent application (Clayton, 2018; Office of the Auditor General, 2020). The following reforms aim to create a legal and institutional infrastructure capable of holding the RCMP accountable.

1. Independent Oversight Authority with Enforcement Powers

Currently, the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission (CRCC) lacks the authority to mandate compliance. Its recommendations are non-binding, and investigations are often undermined by internal RCMP interference. Establishing an independent oversight body, modeled on the UK's Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) and Australia's Law Enforcement Conduct Commission (LECC), would significantly improve accountability (IOPC, 2021; LECC, 2020). This authority should have:

- The legal ability to initiate and complete independent investigations.
- Subpoena powers to compel testimony and obtain documents.
- Jurisdiction over disciplinary actions, including suspensions and terminations.
- A statutory mandate for transparency through regular public reporting.

2. Gender Equity and Anti-Misconduct Benchmarks Linked to Funding

Accountability must be embedded in performance metrics. Federal funding to RCMP divisions should be contingent upon achieving specific benchmarks related to gender equity and anti-harassment compliance. Metrics should include:

- Gender parity in hiring and promotions.

- Reduction in complaint dismissal rates.
- Timeliness and outcomes of harassment investigations.
- Anonymous staff surveys to assess internal climate. Failure to meet targets would trigger external audits and possible financial penalties.

3. Strengthened Whistleblower Protections

Many officers who report misconduct face retaliation, ranging from social ostracism to career stagnation (Hoffman, 2018). To encourage reporting and protect truth-tellers:

- Legislation must guarantee anonymity and career protection.
- Third-party legal representation must be offered to all whistleblowers.
- Supervisors who engage in retaliatory behavior should face immediate disciplinary review.

These protections would help break the culture of silence that allows misconduct to flourish.

4. Survivor-Centered Restorative Justice and Reparations Program

Justice must be survivor focused. Many women who experience harassment in the RCMP lose not only their careers but also suffer psychological and financial damage (Bastarache, 2020).

Survivor-centered programs should include:

- Restorative justice circles led by trauma-informed facilitators.
- Financial compensation for lost income, therapy, and emotional harm.
- Career restoration options, including re-entry pathways for those who left due to abuse.

These policies reflect a commitment to healing and acknowledgment of institutional harm.

Training and Education

Structural reform must be accompanied by cultural change. Education is a critical tool for transforming the values and behaviors that underpin systemic misconduct. This research shows that training in the RCMP has historically been treated as procedural rather than transformative. What is needed is education that challenges norms, encourages reflection, and builds inclusive competencies (MacDonald & Leach, 2021).

1. Mandatory Anti-Harassment and Trauma-Informed Training

Every RCMP employee, from cadet to commissioner, should undergo:

- Annual sessions on consent, boundaries, and professional conduct.
- Instruction on recognizing and responding to trauma.
- Interactive modules on ethical decision-making. Importantly, training must be led by independent educators and evaluated for effectiveness.

2. Intersectional Cultural Competency Programs

Policing cannot be effective without cultural literacy. Training must address how systemic racism, colonialism, and gender identity intersect with police practice (UNODC, 2019). This includes:

- Anti-racism and anti-colonialism education grounded in Canada's history.
- LGBTQ+ inclusion workshops facilitated by members of those communities.
- Dialogue-based learning formats that promote empathy and understanding.

3. Leadership Development with Accountability Focus

Promotion should require demonstrable knowledge of equity principles. Candidates for leadership must:

- Complete ethical leadership and inclusive management training.
- Undergo peer and subordinate evaluations.
- Commit to reform goals as a condition of advancement. Leadership accountability is essential to reshaping RCMP culture from the top down (Smith, 2020).

4. Peer Mentorship and Cultural Transformation Officers

Each RCMP division should employ at least one Cultural Transformation Officer, responsible for:

- Monitoring equity compliance at the team level.
- Supporting officers facing harassment or discrimination.
- Facilitating regular training and discussions on organizational values. These officers must report to a national Gender Equity Division, ensuring autonomy and oversight.

External Oversight and Accountability

Institutional self-regulation has proven insufficient. To guarantee justice and rebuild public trust, there must be robust, transparent, and participatory oversight mechanisms.

1. Community-Led Monitoring Panels

Local panels comprising survivors, legal experts, Indigenous leaders, and civil society organizations should:

- Review RCMP conduct at the divisional level.

- Evaluate the relevance and effectiveness of local training programs.
- Participate in reform strategy development. Such panels democratize oversight and ground reform in lived realities (Canadian Women’s Foundation, 2022).

2. National Gender Equity in Policing Commission

A federally funded body must oversee implementation and monitor trends nationally. It should:

- Create a public-facing Gender Equity Scorecard.
- Investigate and intervene in persistent equity violations.
- Align policy across municipal, provincial, and federal law enforcement bodies. This Commission would ensure reform is not isolated but systemically supported.

3. Transparent Public Reporting via Digital Dashboards

Transparency is critical to public trust. Each RCMP detachment should:

- Maintain online dashboards displaying anonymized data on misconduct complaints.
- Update the public quarterly on progress toward reform goals.
- Engage communities in co-evaluation processes. This model ensures the RCMP is accountable not just to internal bodies, but to the people it serves (Office of the Auditor General, 2020).

The RCMP continues to face widespread criticism regarding its inability to transform institutional culture, as documented in the Auditor General’s Reports (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2020). Three core issues stand out:

1. Lack of Independent Oversight

RCMP internal investigation units are not independent, resulting in bias, delays, and a tendency to protect senior leadership (Hoffman, 2018).

2. Failure to Address Workplace Culture

Hypermasculinity and paramilitary norms create a culture of silence and exclusion. Policies aimed solely at punishing offenders do little to shift these cultural dynamics (Baker, 2016).

3. Insufficient Accountability

Many offenders remain in their roles or are quietly reassigned, undermining the message of zero tolerance (King, 2019).

Recommendations for Reform

The persistent issues of harassment, discrimination, abuse of power, and lack of accountability within the RCMP, as evidenced by both historical and ongoing legal cases, demand a comprehensive, multi-level reform strategy. The recommendations below are grounded in the principles of institutional transparency, human rights, and restorative justice. They are designed to catalyze sustainable organizational change and rebuild public trust in Canada's national police force.

1. Establish a Robust and Independent Civilian Oversight Board

One of the most urgent reforms is the establishment of an independent civilian oversight body with real investigatory and disciplinary powers. Unlike the current Civilian Review and Complaints Commission (CRCC), which lacks binding authority, this new body should have legislative backing to:

- Initiate investigations without prior complaints.

- Subpoena documents and compel witness testimony.
- Make binding decisions on disciplinary measures.
- Oversee the implementation of cultural and procedural reforms.

Civilian oversight bodies in countries such as the United Kingdom and New Zealand have demonstrated that strong, independent institutions can successfully investigate misconduct and recommend systemic changes. To be effective, such a board must be fully independent of the RCMP and the federal government, with members drawn from diverse communities, including Indigenous, racialized, LGBTQ2S+, and gender advocacy organizations. A transparent appointment process will be essential to maintaining legitimacy and public confidence (Roach, 2020).

2. Comprehensive and Ongoing Gender, Ethics, and Anti-Discrimination Training

While ethics training already exists within the RCMP, it has often been criticized as superficial, infrequent, and compliance-based. Reform must transform this into a continuous and evolving learning process grounded in research and critical pedagogy. Training must include:

- Anti-oppression and anti-racism education.
- Cultural humility training with input from marginalized communities.
- Historical awareness of the RCMP's colonial legacy and role in Indigenous dispossession.
- Intersectional approaches to understanding how gender, race, sexuality, and power intersect in workplace harassment.
- Emotional intelligence development and trauma-informed practices.

Training should begin at the recruitment stage and be integrated into career development and leadership programs. It must be facilitated by external experts to prevent conflicts of interest and enhance credibility. Studies have consistently shown that values-based training, especially when reinforced by supportive policies and leadership accountability, leads to measurable reductions in discriminatory behavior (MacDonald & Leach, 2021; Tolley & Turnbull, 2019).

Currently, many RCMP members fear retaliation when reporting misconduct, especially in isolated or rural postings where institutional culture is deeply entrenched. Reforms must include:

- Confidential and anonymous reporting channels monitored by an external third party.
- Legal protections for whistleblowers, including against informal retaliation (e.g., missed promotions, social isolation);
- Psychological and legal support services for complainants.
- Mandatory timelines for investigation and transparent resolution procedures.

Whistleblower protection legislation should be updated and extended to include RCMP members, with statutory consequences for superiors who retaliate against those who report misconduct. As noted by the Canadian Centre for Justice Reform (2020), without protective structures, accountability cannot take root.

Institutionalize Transparency and Public Accountability

Public trust depends on transparency. The RCMP must adopt policies that:

- Mandate the public release of annual data on complaints, disciplinary outcomes, and the status of reform efforts.
- Establish open-access databases where non-identifiable case outcomes are published.

- Require public statements following high-profile misconduct incidents, including information about remedial actions.

Clear and consistent communication of reform initiatives will allow external stakeholders, including civil society and media, to track progress and advocate for continued change. Transparency is not only a democratic principle but a deterrent to further abuse (Carter, 2021).

Promote Leadership Accountability and Culture Change from the Top

Changing institutional culture requires strong, ethical leadership. The RCMP must introduce policies that:

- Link promotions and appointments to demonstrated commitments to ethical leadership and inclusivity.
- Require all supervisory personnel to receive advanced ethics and leadership training.
- Remove or reassign leaders who are found to have enabled or ignored misconduct.
- Implement peer and subordinate reviews as part of performance evaluations for all managers.

The RCMP must publicly demonstrate a commitment to culture change by elevating leaders who are reflective, ethical, and reform oriented. As seen in the private sector and other police services, leadership accountability is often the single most powerful driver of organizational transformation (Haggerty & Minaker, 2019).

External Evaluation and Performance Audits

To ensure sustained progress, the RCMP must be subject to regular audits and reviews by independent agencies such as the Auditor General of Canada or specially appointed human rights bodies. These evaluations should:

- Examine policy implementation and effectiveness.
- Include surveys of RCMP members about their experiences of workplace culture.
- Assess the accessibility and fairness of grievance mechanisms.
- Make all findings public with actionable recommendations.

Audit frameworks should also include consultation with survivors of RCMP misconduct, ensuring that reform is grounded in lived experience. This type of ongoing external scrutiny is essential to ensure that reforms are not only announced but implemented and maintained over time.

Establish Trauma-Informed Support Services for Survivors

Survivors of RCMP harassment and abuse whether civilian employees or officers require dedicated services to support their recovery. These should include:

- Free and confidential trauma counselling.
- Legal aid and advocacy during internal or legal proceedings.
- Career support and accommodations to ensure survivors can remain in the workforce without fear or stigma.

This recommendation recognizes that reform is not only structural but also relational and emotional. Repairing harm requires investing in the well-being of those most impacted by institutional failure.

The evidence gathered throughout the study reveals not only the devastating personal and professional consequences of sexual misconduct on female officers but also the entrenched systemic failures that enable such behavior to persist. From the *Merlo-Davidson v. Canada (RCMP)* class action (King, 2019) to more recent and ongoing cases such as *Doe v. RCMP* (Canadian Legal Monitor, 2023), a consistent pattern emerges: institutional inaction, retaliation against whistleblowers, and the normalization of hypermasculinity and patriarchal power dynamics (Brubaker, 2017; Hoffman, 2018). These patterns point to a deeply embedded organizational culture resistant to change and accountability (Lynch, 2018).

Despite public apologies, financial settlements, and occasional policy adjustments, the RCMP continues to fall short of implementing transformative reforms. The internal complaint systems remain opaque and often retraumatizing, while leadership frequently prioritizes the institution's reputation over individual justice (O'Brien, 2022). The limited scope and enforcement of existing oversight mechanisms—often lacking independence and binding authority—have further eroded public trust and reinforced perceptions of institutional impunity (Carter, 2021).

This research makes clear that meaningful reform within the RCMP cannot be achieved through surface-level policy revisions or one-time settlements. What is required is a multi-pronged and sustained approach encompassing legal restructuring, the establishment of truly independent oversight, and a concerted effort to transform the organizational culture from the top down (Roach, 2020). Training must shift from procedural compliance to value-driven learning that challenges harmful norms and emphasizes empathy, equity, and ethical leadership (MacDonald & Leach, 2021; Tolley & Turnbull, 2019).

Also, reform must be survivor-centered, acknowledging the long-term psychological, emotional, and professional harm caused by sexual misconduct. It must also include trauma-

informed support systems and strong whistleblower protections to ensure that victims and allies are not silenced through fear or institutional retaliation (Canadian Centre for Justice Reform, 2020). Ultimately, the persistence of misconduct within the RCMP undermines not only the safety and dignity of those who serve within it but also the broader legitimacy of Canadian law enforcement in the eyes of the public. Without systemic change, the RCMP risks continued erosion of its social contract and credibility. The path forward requires political will, institutional courage, and unwavering commitment to justice and equity. Only through comprehensive, transparent, and accountable reform can the RCMP become a truly inclusive and trustworthy national institution.

Conclusion: From Policy to Transformation

This section has laid out a comprehensive and multi-dimensional framework for reforming the RCMP. The recommendations are grounded in research, international models, and survivor advocacy. Structural reforms aim to eliminate procedural loopholes that shield misconduct. Training reforms seek to build awareness, empathy, and leadership accountability. External oversight introduces public accountability and democratizes safety. Collectively, these changes form a blueprint not only for reducing harm but for transforming policing into a gender-equitable, transparent, and trusted institution.

Research Implications and Future Directions

The findings of this study reveal a deep-rooted culture of systemic sexual misconduct within the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), demanding comprehensive institutional reforms. These implications are not only crucial for the internal functioning of the RCMP but also for the public's perception of law enforcement as a trustworthy and equitable institution.

Meaningful reform must address both cultural norms and structural policies, redefining the operational ethos of Canada's national police force.

Cultural and Structural Changes

To dismantle entrenched patterns of misconduct, it is essential for the RCMP to initiate both cultural and structural transformations. Culturally, there must be a deliberate shift from a hyper-masculine, hierarchical ethos toward a more inclusive and egalitarian workplace. Research indicates that police culture is often resistant to gender diversity and harbors hostility toward women, particularly those who challenge the status quo (Silvestri, 2018). Reform should involve anti-harassment training that goes beyond compliance and fosters genuine cultural change, promoting empathy, ethical conduct, and respect among officers (Human Rights Watch, 2020).

Structurally, recruitment and promotion policies must be re-evaluated to prioritize diversity and meritocracy. Initiatives such as gender-sensitive recruitment strategies and transparent promotion criteria can combat the traditional old-boys' network that dominates police hierarchies. The RCMP should also institutionalize mechanisms for reporting misconduct anonymously and securely, ensuring that complainants are protected from retaliation (Jones & Williams, 2021).

Leadership and Accountability

Transformational leadership is crucial in dismantling toxic workplace cultures. Within the RCMP, leadership has historically failed to uphold accountability for misconduct, fostering a climate of impunity. Future-oriented leadership must be ethically grounded and transparent, actively involved in setting behavioral expectations and enforcing consequences (Prenzler & Sinclair, 2013). Leaders must model the values they wish to see in their subordinates, adopting inclusive practices that prioritize well-being, integrity, and respect.

Accountability structures should be overhauled to include independent oversight bodies with real investigatory powers. The RCMP's current internal review mechanisms lack transparency and have been criticized for protecting perpetrators rather than supporting victims (Brown, 2017). External civilian review boards, coupled with routine audits and performance evaluations, could bolster trust and ensure that misconduct is appropriately addressed.

Institutional Commitment to Reform

Reform cannot be a short-term initiative but must reflect a long-term institutional commitment. This includes strategic planning that integrates gender equity goals into all aspects of policing operations. The RCMP should develop a comprehensive gender equity framework, complete with measurable benchmarks, regular evaluations, and dedicated funding. Collaboration with civil society organizations and gender experts can further enhance the legitimacy and effectiveness of reform efforts (Government of Canada, 2022).

Furthermore, the RCMP must engage in continuous dialogue with both internal stakeholders officers, staff, and union representatives and external ones, including advocacy groups and affected communities. This participatory approach is essential in cultivating a transparent, accountable, and inclusive police service (Walklate & Mythen, 2018).

Broader Social Implications

While this research specifically examines the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), its implications extend well beyond this singular institution, shedding light on the wider systemic issues of gender-based violence, abuse, and inequality that pervade policing institutions both across Canada and internationally. The persistence of these issues within law enforcement agencies highlights the need for a far-reaching conversation about the structures and cultures that allow such

misconduct to thrive unchecked. Gender-based violence in policing is not an isolated phenomenon unique to the RCMP but part of a broader global trend where power, gender, and race intersect in ways that undermine the safety and dignity of marginalized individuals (MacDonald & Leach, 2021). As such, the findings of this research are critical not only for improving the RCMP but for informing policy changes within law enforcement agencies worldwide.

In Canada, the RCMP has long been considered a cornerstone of national identity, symbolizing authority, discipline, and justice. However, the history of misconduct, harassment, and institutionalized discrimination within its ranks contradicts this image, revealing the deep-rooted challenges of gender inequality and sexism. These issues are not isolated to the RCMP but resonate across police forces throughout the country, where similar patterns of abuse and misconduct against women, particularly those in marginalized communities, have been documented (Brubaker, 2017). This reality signals the urgent need for nationwide policy discussions and reform strategies that address the persistent failure of law enforcement to protect those who serve within it and those whom it is meant to protect.

Internationally, the RCMP's struggles with gendered misconduct can also be compared to similar issues faced by police forces in other countries. From the United States to the United Kingdom, incidents of sexual harassment, abuse of power, and discrimination against women within law enforcement are not unique to Canada. For example, the #MeToo movement, which has seen women across various sectors speaking out against harassment, also resonated within the policing community, highlighting the global scale of the problem. Comparative studies between countries demonstrate that police cultures often characterized by hypermasculinity, a “boys' club” mentality, and resistance to change create environments where abuses of power and gender inequality thrive (Cunneen & Tauri, 2016). These similarities indicate that reform efforts cannot

be confined to one institution but must involve international cooperation and the sharing of best practices.

The ongoing challenges in addressing gender-based violence in policing reflect deeper societal issues, including entrenched cultural norms, systemic discrimination, and a failure to confront the intersections of power, race, and gender in the workplace. These issues require broad-based reform strategies that go beyond law enforcement and encompass societal shifts toward greater gender equity and justice. Public trust in policing cannot be restored until these fundamental inequalities are acknowledged and addressed at all levels of governance, from national governments to police departments. The implications of this research call for a reimagining of how policing is structured and how officers are trained to interact with the public, with a stronger emphasis on anti-racism, gender sensitivity, and respect for human rights (Goldsmith, 2005).

Finally, while this study highlights the need for institutional change within the RCMP, it also underscores the broader responsibility of society as a whole to engage in the work of dismantling systems of oppression. This includes recognizing and addressing the unequal treatment faced by Indigenous peoples, racialized women, and other marginalized communities at the hands of law enforcement. The findings of this research should act as a catalyst for policymakers, academics, and community leaders to collaborate on reform strategies that prioritize justice, equity, and human dignity, both within the RCMP and in policing systems worldwide.

In conclusion, the issues of gender-based violence and inequality within the RCMP are emblematic of broader, systemic problems within law enforcement institutions worldwide. Addressing these issues requires not only national policy changes but also a commitment to international cooperation and social reform. Only through comprehensive, collaborative, and

sustained efforts can meaningful change be achieved, ensuring that law enforcement agencies become institutions that truly serve and protect all individuals with fairness and respect.

Public Trust and Law Enforcement

Public trust is an essential pillar of democratic policing. Without it, law enforcement agencies struggle to perform their duties effectively, as community cooperation, compliance, and respect for the law are all contingent on a belief in the legitimacy and fairness of policing institutions. In the case of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), a series of high-profile reports and legal actions concerning sexual misconduct, harassment, and abuse of power have severely eroded public confidence. These incidents do not merely reflect isolated acts of wrongdoing but point to broader, systemic failings within the organizational culture and governance structures of the RCMP. This erosion of trust has implications not only for the RCMP but also for the broader perception of law enforcement legitimacy in Canada (Goldsmith, 2005).

Merely implementing surface-level reforms such as updated harassment policies or symbolic leadership changes will not be sufficient to rebuild the fractured relationship between the RCMP and the public. What is required is a visible, authentic, and sustained commitment to systemic change grounded in justice, equity, and accountability. Trust cannot be restored through press releases or internal memos; it must be rebuilt through consistent actions that demonstrate a genuine willingness to confront institutional shortcomings and protect the rights and dignity of all officers, particularly those from historically marginalized groups (Goldsmith, 2005).

Transparency and accountability must become cornerstones of the RCMP's operational philosophy. When misconduct is addressed promptly, fairly, and publicly, it sets a strong precedent not just for internal culture change within the RCMP but also for other police services across the

country. Such responses signal that the institution is not above the law and that it is willing to undergo the difficult but necessary process of transformation. Moreover, the implementation of robust external oversight mechanisms ones that are independent, well-resourced, and empowered to enforce consequences would greatly enhance the credibility of reform efforts in the eyes of the public (Goldsmith, 2005).

Restoring public trust also entails meaningful engagement with communities who have been disproportionately harmed by police misconduct and institutional neglect. In particular, Indigenous communities, racialized women, and other vulnerable groups must be centered in any reform process—not merely as subjects of outreach but as active participants in shaping policy and accountability frameworks. Historical and ongoing patterns of systemic racism and gendered violence have made these communities understandably wary of law enforcement institutions. Without addressing these specific harms, no reform effort can be truly comprehensive or credible (Cunneen & Tauri, 2016).

Engagement must be substantive rather than symbolic. This involves investing in culturally appropriate policing strategies, supporting community-led justice initiatives, and incorporating diverse voices into decision-making structures at every level of the RCMP. As Cunneen and Tauri (2016) argue, trust is not given it is earned through sustained, relational work that recognizes historical injustices and commits to redressing them through structural change.

In sum, public trust in law enforcement, especially in the RCMP, cannot be repaired through rhetoric alone. It demands transparency, survivor-centered responses to misconduct, and a commitment to rebuilding relationships through humility, justice, and institutional accountability. Without these core elements, any effort to improve the public perception of the RCMP risks being seen as insincere or self-serving.

Gender Equality in Policing

Promoting gender equality in policing isn't just about fairness for officers; it's also about improving the quality of public service overall. Research shows that gender-diverse police forces are often better at handling sensitive cases, like those involving domestic violence and sexual assault. Officers with diverse perspectives bring a more well-rounded approach to these issues, allowing for better responses that are more empathetic and effective. In addition, having a more inclusive police force helps to strengthen the relationship between officers and the communities they serve, which can lead to more trust and better cooperation between the public and law enforcement (Rabe-Hemp, 2008).

For the RCMP, fostering gender equality within the force can also improve the overall effectiveness of the organization. A more inclusive culture encourages better decision-making and problem-solving, because it draws on a wider range of perspectives. When there's a balance in the team, the force is more equipped to handle the varied challenges it faces. This, in turn, can lead to better public safety outcomes and more successful policing efforts.

Gender equality in policing does not just benefit the police force; it also has wider societal implications. When the police force challenges traditional gender norms and brings more women into positions of power, it helps shift societal attitudes toward gender equality. This influence can extend to other institutions, encouraging them to adopt more inclusive practices as well. So, the impact of creating gender-balanced policing structures goes beyond just the police and can influence the broader societal landscape (Westmarland, 2017). Ultimately, promoting gender equality within police forces like the RCMP isn't just a matter of improving workplace culture; it's about making a real impact on society as a whole. By encouraging more gender-diverse

leadership, police forces can help create more equitable communities and set an example for other organizations to follow.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study opens several pathways for future research that could deepen our understanding of systemic sexual misconduct and inform more effective reforms. Such research should be interdisciplinary, intersectional, and comparative, reflecting the complexity of the issues at hand.

Longitudinal Studies on Reform

One of the most pressing needs is for longitudinal research that tracks the implementation and outcomes of reform initiatives within the RCMP over time. Short-term evaluations fail to capture the evolving dynamics of institutional change. Longitudinal studies could assess whether gender-sensitive policies lead to measurable reductions in misconduct and improvements in workplace culture (Benoit et al., 2019). Such research would be invaluable for policymakers, enabling evidence-based decision-making.

Longitudinal data can help identify unintended consequences of reform efforts and offer insight into which strategies are most sustainable. For example, does mandatory anti-harassment training have long-term impacts on officer behavior and attitudes, or does it foster resistance and cynicism? These are critical questions for future exploration.

Intersectionality in Policing

Another important avenue is intersectional research that examines how gender intersects with other dimensions of identity race, class, sexuality, and disability to shape experiences of misconduct in law enforcement. Intersectionality, a concept introduced by Crenshaw (1989),

allows researchers to move beyond single-axis frameworks and better understand the multifaceted nature of oppression.

For instance, Indigenous women in the RCMP may face compounded forms of discrimination that are not adequately addressed by gender-focused reforms alone. Future studies could explore how different identities mediate exposure to misconduct, influence coping strategies, and affect access to justice (Razack, 2015).

Cross-National Comparisons

Comparative studies between Canadian law enforcement agencies and their international counterparts could identify global trends and localized challenges. Such research can highlight best practices from other jurisdictions that have successfully addressed gender-based misconduct. For example, Scandinavian countries often rank highly in gender equality and may offer insights into how structural and cultural factors interact to produce more equitable policing environments (Lister, 2020).

Furthermore, comparative studies could investigate how different models of civilian oversight, training, and recruitment influence outcomes related to misconduct. These insights would be particularly useful in informing Canadian policy debates and adapting international innovations to local contexts.

Other Future Directions

Proposed Areas for Future Research and Institutional Reform

Organizational Resistance to Reform: Future studies could investigate the internal resistance to change within the RCMP, focusing on the cultural, institutional, and political barriers that hinder reform efforts. This includes examining hierarchical structures, traditional masculinity norms, and political influence within law enforcement agencies that often create a "closed circle" around accountability. Research should also explore the roles of leadership, training, and union influence in either supporting or obstructing meaningful reforms (Harris, 2019). Identifying these barriers will be essential for crafting strategies that can effectively address the deep-rooted issues of misconduct and inequality.

Victim-Centered Approaches: One critical avenue for future research lies in developing and implementing more effective victim-centered approaches to workplace sexual misconduct. This includes examining trauma-informed care models and restorative justice practices within law enforcement agencies. Research could explore how to ensure that victims receive not only legal recourse but also emotional and psychological support, ensuring that their voices are prioritized in both the reporting and resolution of cases. Studies should also analyze the effectiveness of specialized support systems for victims within police departments, especially in relation to barriers that prevent reporting and retaliation against those who come forward (Baker & Schreiber, 2021).

Technology and Misconduct: Technological advancements, such as body cameras, GPS tracking, and internal reporting systems, provide significant opportunities for improving accountability within law enforcement agencies. Future research should investigate the role of these technologies in documenting, reporting, and resolving sexual misconduct allegations. Specifically, research could examine how digital platforms either support or hinder transparency, considering both the potential for misuse (e.g., selective video editing or manipulation) and the capacity for improvement in documenting incidents. Additionally, studies should explore how

technological innovations like predictive policing and surveillance technologies can inadvertently perpetuate biases, especially against marginalized communities (Graham & Case, 2020).

Training Efficacy: Given the high stakes of cultural transformation, it is essential to evaluate the effectiveness of different types of training programs aimed at preventing sexual misconduct and promoting equity in policing. Research should compare scenario-based training, peer-led discussions, and comprehensive cultural education programs to assess which methods are most effective in shifting attitudes and behaviors regarding gender, race, and power dynamics. The evaluation should include both qualitative and quantitative metrics, examining changes in officers' attitudes, their willingness to intervene in inappropriate behavior, and the long-term cultural impact within the force (Lee & Squires, 2020).

Proposal for Systemic Reform Across Law Enforcement Agencies

Given the significant systemic failures uncovered in this research, it is imperative that law enforcement agencies implement a comprehensive, multi-pronged approach to reform that includes not just internal changes but also external oversight, community involvement, and a culture of accountability. To achieve this, the following key principles should be adopted:

Independent Oversight and External Accountability: Establish independent civilian oversight boards with the power to investigate allegations of misconduct, issue recommendations, and ensure accountability. These boards should have full access to internal records and be empowered to take disciplinary actions, ensuring that internal investigations are not influenced by institutional bias. They should also conduct regular audits of police practices and policies, and engage directly with the communities most affected by law enforcement practices, particularly marginalized groups (Tyler, 2017).

Comprehensive Anti-Bias and Cultural Competency Training: Implement mandatory, comprehensive anti-bias and cultural competency training for all officers, focused on addressing the intersectionality of gender, race, and power within policing. This training should go beyond legal compliance and focus on fostering empathy, bystander intervention, and the de-escalation of potential conflicts. The training should be continuous and adapted to reflect evolving societal norms and issues, with regular assessments of its effectiveness in transforming institutional culture (Goldsmith, 2005; Lee & Squires, 2020).

Enhanced Victim Support and Restorative Justice: Develop robust, trauma-informed victim support systems, ensuring that survivors of sexual misconduct and workplace violence have access to confidential reporting systems, counseling, and restorative justice options. Restorative justice programs should prioritize healing for both the victim and the institution, allowing for open dialogue, accountability, and reconciliation. These programs should be integrated into the agency's broader reform strategy and be available to all personnel, not just those involved in high-profile cases (Baker & Schreiber, 2021).

Use of Technology for Transparency and Accountability: Invest in technologies that promote transparency and accountability within law enforcement agencies. Body cameras, GPS tracking, and digital reporting platforms can help to document and resolve misconduct allegations, but their use must be governed by strict policies to ensure that they are not selectively used or manipulated. Technology should also be used to improve community-police relations by enabling more effective communication and public engagement with law enforcement (Graham & Case, 2020).

Long-Term, Intersectional Research: Encourage and fund longitudinal, intersectional research that evaluates the long-term impact of reform measures on law enforcement culture,

behavior, and public trust. This research should include input from a broad range of stakeholders, including police officers, victims of misconduct, and members of marginalized communities. It should also assess the effects of reforms on organizational structures, training programs, and reporting mechanisms, providing data-driven insights for future improvements (Harris, 2019).

Sustained and multifaceted research efforts are crucial for understanding and addressing the complex dynamics of sexual misconduct in law enforcement. By focusing on institutional resistance, victim support, technology, and training, future studies can provide the foundation for comprehensive reforms. These reforms must be grounded in justice, equity, and accountability, ensuring that the experiences of those most affected by misconduct are heard and respected. In doing so, law enforcement agencies across the globe can begin to rebuild public trust and ensure a policing system that truly serves and protects all members of society with fairness, dignity, and respect.

Recommendations: local and legal

For Jiwani (1998), institutional or government social services lack any critical awareness of the needs of women experiencing or leaving violent relationships. Recommendations concerning the justice system included:

- treatment of women survivors' experiences as credible and valid; increased provision of court services and legal aid; increased awareness of the dynamics underpinning woman abuse;
- increased enforcement of orders (restraining, no contact orders and peace bonds);
- more vigorous implementation of policies dealing with violence against women in intimate relationships.

- increased representation of women within the police; and,
- a coordinated response, and stronger laws against woman abuse.

The justice system needs to privilege the protection of women who are survivors of abuse. Recommendations include a) the need for Victim Assistance Services to provide court accompaniment and to act as liaisons between police, courts, legal aid, and women survivors; and, b) changing the criteria for eligibility and range of coverage for services provided by legal aid.

In addition to monitoring and individual advocacy, ongoing inquiries into, or engaging independent systemic reviews of, the justice system's response to violence are needed. Education of police as it relates to the discrimination and sexism

- i) provide training for all justice system personnel about the traumatic impact of male violence .

Recommendations for social service delivery agencies and institutions (Jiwani, 1998) concern the following a coordinated responses to better serve the needs of women living with abuse.

Need for better trained personnel.

the re-assessment and eradication of discriminatory policies; increased services.

proactive measures that would enable the re-integration of survivors into the labour force and society.

early intervention strategies and programs; and above all,

the need for better communication strategies (using plain language and multilingual formats) by which to inform survivors of their rights and eligibility to services, as well as the kinds of services that are available and accessible.

Recommendations (ibid) for communities (residents, agencies and businesses), include proactive approaches for:

- i) increasing awareness about woman abuse and services that are available for survivors;
- ii) increased public education strategies which involve the use of the media, organization of public events and advertising campaigns;
- iii) changing attitudes towards woman abuse and women in general; introduction of violence prevention curricula and strategies in schools; and,
- iv) enhanced support for community-based services and initiatives.

Recommendations (ibid) for women who are currently in abusive relationships include the following:

- i) that women develop safety measures and supportive networks;
- ii) research the availability of services in their area;
- iii) recognize that abusers are not going to change;
- iv) not remain in the abusive relationship for the sake of children; and,
- v) to recognize that they are not alone.

Action: global and political

The arguments required to sustain a challenge against the hegemonic oppression of women have been introduced. The struggles against male supremacist orthodoxies invite a more ongoing, intrepid analytical focus and circumspect vigilance. Substantively, there is no facile conclusion as long as patriarchy exists. Much work needs to be done. etc.

A programme of action initiated by the women's movement is a long-term practice and a multi-tiered conceptual commitment to confront dominant ideologies, male dominated academic arrogance, and state controls over the experiences of women everywhere. The best programs are always

The women's movement is led and directed by women for the good of both women and men. Thus, the active interest of men is sought in achieving this end. In this struggle against the anti-feminist agenda, men can no longer remain silent. By unravelling the contradictions, exposing the myths and by moving beyond the acknowledgement of women's oppression, men are also required to speak loudly and act openly against the tyrannical treatment of women.

Simply, men can contribute by recognizing their own privilege and limited consciousness in supporting feminist perspectives. Former Supreme Court Justice Bertha Wilson argued that gender bias is not a woman's problem, it's a man's problem; "it's they who must solve it" (Toronto Star, 1, 11, 1992: A16). Far too often the interests of men have been motivated by an insidious accommodation to paternalism and conveniently instrumental fixation on material rewards. Rather than struggle in addressing the solutions, immediate and long-term, far too many male researchers continue to be satiated with recycled inquiries that define the problem over and over again. Women know all too well what the problems are without the gratuitous consultation of men. Given that feminists have clearly articulated the systemic problems, cultural obstacles and institutional barriers, one can only question the constant proliferation of state-sponsored research especially by

men. As Beverly Bain, national co-ordinator for the National Action Committee on the Status of Women: "We can stop studying this [violence] now... What we want is action to start dealing with the problem" (Toronto Star, 19, 11, 1993: A29). The task here for male researchers is to return to their respective constituencies and develop strategies for power-sharing, consciousness raising and critical interrogation. Conscience not convenience; the lived commitment not the pursuit of lucrative research projects; and "local action" not more uncontested claims that speak on behalf of women's experiences should prompt men to respond more sensitively. In other words men need to learn to move over and step aside when releasing the results of their well funded research.

Perhaps some serious concern ought to be given by both male researchers and their respective funding agencies to ensure that a proportion of their exorbitant budgets be set aside to assist shelters, mothers support groups, daycare and community-based organizations. Undoubtedly, these suggestions will invite vituperative criticisms from male researchers who have invested considerably in investigating the oppression of women. But, the text of male inquiries however, must be contextualized within wider ideological constructions, the coherent meanings of masculinity and the co-presence of simultaneous discourses that inevitably fragment the fundamental agenda of empowering women. As Valverde instructs, feminist political, social and legal thought seeks to challenge the organization of basic social categories (1991:241). Research, as a social activity, is no exception.

As Visano (2005: iii) notes, a troubling feature of conventional approaches is the glaring absences of any conceptual grasp of both the intersections of identity, institutions and ideologies and the co-joint elements in the ideological-institutional nexus. These absences thwart all promise or prospect of remedy. Typically, contemporary scholarship and administrative policies woefully fail to locate conferred administrative roles within the broader context of ideologies let alone daily

institutional practices. A micro-analysis of occupational expectations and structural accommodations that impact on decisions is presented in this inquiry.

As Audrey Lorde and Albert Einstein respectively observed “the master’s tools will not dismantle the master’s house” and “no problem can be solved from the same consciousness that created it”. Instead, as Fanon reminded us, the solution to this inherent cycle of violence in criminal justice rests in a phenomenon that has become so foreign to everyday life—consciousness of transcendence, a commitment to the humanity of interconnectedness. (ibid 24). Douglas and Johnson (1977: 407) are correct in their paradox that “the more rules [we make to control deviance] the more official deviance there will be.” Remedies based on assuring a greater flow of accurate information about bureaucracies are remedies in the right direction. The secrecy and the interminable simultaneity of necessity which covers up so much official deviance must be penetrated and exposed as modalities of cultural pathologies and contradictions in social fracture.

‘It is not difference which immobilizes us, but silence.

And there are so many silences to be broken.” Audre Lorde, (2007)

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